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TOWN CRIES

By Padraic Fallon

THIS town is vague as air,
Less solid is
The nightfall of the earth
Outside town walls ;
Substance among the shadow
And starlight of the night's
Insubstantial geometries ;
A boy walks.

O I am goat to the hips—
Tell me that I dream—
With a cocked and horned eye ;
But I am, O I am too,
With a change that ruins my lips,
Saint John of the Cross who sings
So sweetly in the night
With the voice of a curlew.

Secretly, unexpectedly
I walk into Virgo's blue lamp
Just as she rises in
Her stiff shift from the sea-bed ;
By a black gable I disappear,
Leaping a dead wall, my feet
Are syllables of night in the vegetable gardens
Before one hair brightens on her head.

The hobnailed low fingers
 Of elm trees are clutching
 Her archaic necklaces before
 I wander into her skyline ;
 With a caper of horned shadow I
 Am uncovered in the churchyard
 And blessing by the stone door
 I step in out of starshine.

The quiet of holy-water
 And the distant rose
 Of the sanctuary drift over
 Waves of still pews,
 Where darkness gropes with golden eyes
 For monstrances that glitter with the Host,
 I drop the jacket of flesh and tremble
 Out on the bright bare poles of the cross.

Ah, Virgo hurrying after,
 May only catch my cast off
 Horned shadow at the stone door,
 She may fondle it and feel
 For the bright backbone with hands
 That stings like ice and nettles—
 But it's only shadow, a shadow
 That will crumple under her heel.

II

Mind is vague as air,
 Look into my eyes, please !
 I am nervous of this hollow town
 That opens within my skull ;
 I know this town, O, I knew it well
 When fields come home to roost this evening
 And rooks by the steeple were black notes
 Of music on the last gold bars of the sun.

Now little lamps that threw
Sides brighter than their own
On womens' window-blinds go out
As one, and suddenly
The shocked darkness leaps upon
Black belts and leather harness
As out of the barred barracks
There issues a silent police.

They take over the night from Virgo ;
With holsters and guns
They arm for murder her pale light
As she drifts by the gables ;
She can wear a Glenagarry cap
With a black tassel on it,
A belt of bombs, the king's crest,
And boots as bright as sables.

Will I rouse the Bishop
From his purple stool,
Will I call the nine priests
From their stone house ?
O shout for the Christian Brothers
And the Protestant Parson !
I will get the Resident Magistrate
On the town telephone.

But ah who will answer a dreaming man
Though he dream the one dream time and again ?
I have called and called before this
Inside my head.
Look into my eyes, please !
Tell me again that I dream
Of an insubstantial town and insubstantial people !
Tell me I dream in my bed !

Tell me I am no boy
Bursting into that wild bloom
The hungry saints denied
In bed and bone !
Tell me I no longer kneel before
Mary and the Carpenter,
Their holy candlelight my hairshirt
When the mind turns whore.

Tell me I no longer fear
When the mind breaks out in images
The forehead cannot stay
With any oil or chrism'd thumb ?
For who from the top of such a flower would pay
Heed to the cold hand of a Bishop
When the mouth is dumb and the heart answers only
An older catechism ?

O tell me I do not find
My goat-shape wait in the stone
Of the chapel door to bind me
In that boy's body again !
Tell me I do not run
From laurel to laurel calling
Priest, Bishop, Christian Brother
And babbling Parson !

For I am lost in starlight
And sobbing nightgowns
That stumble through shadows and bring
Starlight and dew tumbling down ;
I am lost in a night that blazes
From blue hips and black harness,
For the Black-and-Tans are
Come to town.

There is only a night
Of new constellations,
And stone singing
A leaden song,
And the whistling air of the town
Lifting like a scalp
As guns explode
All night long.

And silences in corners
Where shopmen hide
In their own purses,
Publicans
Bottled in prayers and
Women lying
In their own soft cries
Begging with their hands.

The Bishop and the Fathers
Come down where the laurels
Wear night like oilskinned sailors
To knock at the Magistrate's door ;
The Bishop knocks till his great ring
Is a rainbow springing from the top of his hand,
The Fathers knock and the Bishop knocks
But there is no answer.

There is only the night
Trembling like jackdaws
In the flickering windows ;
Horizons
Leaping from tall roofs
As small fires take flight,
Their little wings
Snapping like pigeons.

O hurry the morning !
 Open a door !
 I am falling houses,
 I am roofs alight,
 I am shattered doorways
 And gables burning,
 Hurry the morning !
 I am the night.

III

Bid no moon rise !
 Ask no star to show !
 A woman with a faint lamp
 Has opened a door ;
 A woman in a blue lamp
 Talks softly to me.
 Bid no moon rise !
 Bid no star show !

A woman burning faintly
 Through a blue dress
 Talks to me softly with her hands
 While ruins are burning down,
 While doorways fall
 And bells in steeples
 Take flight with the broken bits of the world
 She whispers through her gown.

Bid no moon disperse
 The silent night that grows
 Around me like quiet hair !
 Bid no light enter here where the night
 Stirs so sensibly it seems
 To move about on bare feet
 Touching the furniture
 With hands of starlight !

Mind is vague but O
 More solid is the face
 This rustling starlight fingered among the small
 Sweet jars by the mirror—
 I tell and tell the priest because no vision
 Or star could drop so heavily in a vest
 Of common wool to bruise my mouth and leave
 Long hairs of black and silver on my breast.

FIVE POEMS

Brenda Chamberlain

I

WOULD it not move to pity
 Even a God of Stone
 To see us there
 O piteous, upon the ice ?
 The rocks dripped water.
 Did not our eyes too drip rain ?
 (You could not see the wet upon our lashes
 But somewhere under skin and bones and blood
 Salt water oozed and dripped).

The world so vast and fixed,
 And man so brittle,
 Poised on one leg above a blade of steel,
 Seems frightful on a winter afternoon
 When no sun comes into our lake.

We laughed and the salt tears fell behind our flesh.
 Such laughter,—and white tracery on the ice
 Hissed in a powdered scratch from the skate-blades as we
 went.

Ringed about and then about
 With bastions of stone
 (Grey Gods were seated in the clefts above us),
 We swayed in the thin air
 Weaving our patterns.

Why does no warmth come to our shoulders ?
 Why does no sunlight come upon the lake ?
 Because that the Grey Gods are seated very upright
 With erected heads and stiffened points of hair
 Jealous against the sun.

It does not move to pity
 These Gods of Stone
 Staring from tearless and most heavy lids,
 To see us there
 O piteous, upon the ice.

Poor fools, we have a vast conceit
 To think that we could move even a fly's compassion
 As we go
 Brittle and quick
 Upon the winter lake.

II

It is fear I have of returning
 To broken stairways of rock,
 To the crumbling rottenness of stone :
 Thou water-treacherous
 Ysgolion Duon.

Let my sleep be death-at-night.
 Let it not be to dream of flowers, and sprayed water
 Thrown out in fine drops by a wind moving in the mosses.

May not my mind forget the cleft :
 Wet gulf in the rottenness of stone,
 Where meshes of sprayed water move, that slaked my hairs' thirst to the roots ?

III

He sat by the shore of a lake
 And saw the face of man
 Struggling and writhing at the bottom of the water.
 He looked up at the reeling mountain
 And at the dark cloud reeling over it.

They cared nothing for his impotence.
 He is mortal and must die.
 But they are immortal,
 They will live, crumbling to rebirth, for ever.

Therefore he fled from the presence of the water and the mountain.

IV

TRYFAN

Out of Ogwen
 Whose water has the colour of a heron's wing,
 She rises from roots of rock and broken scree,
 Tilting up to white space with her three peaks
 Buttressed in massive delicacy.

V.

There is death enough in Europe without these
 dead horses on the mountain.
 (They are the underlining, the emphasis of death).
 It is not wonderful that when they live
 their eyes are shadowed under mats of hair.
 Despair and famine do not gripe so hard
 when the bound earth and sky are kept remote
 behind clogged hairs.

The snows engulfed them, pressed their withered haunches
flat,
filled up their nostrils, burdened the cage of their ribs.

The snow retreated. Their bodies stink to heaven
potently crying out to raven hawk and dog :
Come pick us clean, we are part of the death of Europe.

They were never lovely save as foals
before their necks grew long, uncrested ;
but the wildness of the mountain was in their stepping,
the pride of Spring burnt in their haunches ;
they were tawny as the rushes of the marsh.

Now their entrails have gone to make the hawk arrogant :
the prey-birds have had their fill and preen their feathers.

WRECKERS

By Temple Lane

“ WHEN I was only so-big,” said my strong-shouldered love,
“ I heard old bathing women, as brine-cured as their boxes,
Tell tales of the *garmfudach*, the call to spoil and plunder,
The light shown from the Burrow to bait the hidden rocks.

“ That would have been a great thing”—said he “ to be a
wrecker ! ”

And with old women slobbering that word on creaking tongues,
The wrecker seemed an old man with withered limbs and neck :
Even his ghost an old ghost—yet maybe he was young ! ”

I said to my love then—“ But the strong prayers of saints
Are harbour-lights of Heaven, guiding a soul in ! ”
He tossed a stubborn head at me, laughing—“ I will wait
To look for holy lights until my blood is thinner ! ”

I am ageing : I have no son like my love to be a wrecker,
 Luring, drawing, cheating with the false lamps of his eyes.
 In the conscience of the nights, from Garrarus to Helvick Head,
 The wave-tongued caves might curse me for mothering a liar.

" Heart's brightness, will you dare it ? " The black-dyed sin he
 meant.

I shut him out for ever, but others took his meaning.
 I am brine-cured, and my grief is wearying to contentment—
 A girl should be an exile, or she should be a Queen.

MOUNTAIN VILLAGE

By Michael Scot

BUILDERS, apprenticed to the golden eagle,
 Fledged at the mountain's granite-feathered breast,
 Fashioned these seven little forts, beleaguered
 By the proud winds outleaping from the west.
 Stone-plumage, scattered by the marauding storms,
 They wrought into these seven tragic forms ;
 Knowing no style less perilous and regal
 Than the bravado of the beak-built nest.

Seven small houses, a young eagle's flight
 'Neath sky-rimmed hill-top, over sea-bright space ;
 Rough-walled to twice a man's unstooping height,
 Windowed to frame—no more—a human face
 Watching the coming gales bestride the waves ;
 Floored amply for six warriors' narrow graves,
 Cleft with small doors, secret as the eyes that light
 The human spirit's inner dwelling-place.

Lonely and blind as tombs, they crouched beneath
 The sudden onset of a western squall.
 No frail defiance of man's living breath
 Belied the moss-grown stones of burial.
 Unchallenged, the wind mocked through sodden thatch,
 Through crazy door-shutter and broken latch,
 Through sack-stuffed window, and unmortared wall,
 Claiming the mute besieged for conquering death.

The fierce lush grass, edging the mountain lane,
 Licked at the walls with quenchless serpent fire,
 The green strong weeds leaped in the seething rain,
 Thrashing the thresholds with their plashy ire
 Climbing on roof and smokeless chimney, till
 Their lashes threshed the overhanging hill,
 Their dripping tips seeking to interchain
 With the long pendant scourges of the briar.

No living sign denied the hushed surrender
 No stir of kine or dog, of fowl or geese
 No voice proclaimed one last living defender
 Crying entombed for pity or release.
 The purple mountain bowed its cloud-cowled head
 Over a shrouded village of the dead,
 The distant breakers mourned for mortal splendour
 Coffined in mist and stilled in charnel peace.

The passing storm swept over the hill's rim,
 Leaving the houses ghost-grey shadow-cold ;
 Till slow sun glory, spilled from heaven's rim,
 Filled all the wet hushed world with burning gold . . .
 Then the dark doorways opened, one by one,
 And children, golden-lovely as the sun,
 Danced forth over the earth, like Cherubim,
 Sun-winged, sun-sandalled, and sun-aureoled.

A MAKER OF LYRICS

By Padraic Fallon

“O H, you must meet Higgins,” my Poet-editor said to me. We were roaming from book-barrow to book-barrow on one of those autumn mornings when the distances along the quays are composed of mist and silver, a Saturday morning, I remember, because there was a flurry and sparkle of people everywhere and a feeling of restful exhilaration as if the city were taking deeper breaths before relaxing softly on the expanded horizon of the week-end. On such mornings the Pale of Dublin seems really to go down before the soft peaceful invasion of sea and country ; you feel the salmon nosing up the Liffey and turf barges moving in sleepily from the blue bogs. The market stalls are fruit laden, the street corners blossom with flower-girls, the greens with dogs and ducks and children, everywhere there is a criss-cross of restfulness and bustle, a mood of light gaiety which, like those graceful Dublin distances, might come out of one's own heart. It was a day to meet a gay delicate country poet.

I was thinking a good deal about Higgins as we strolled along the quays. His verse came out of my own country, and out of that mental country, too, where I was finding the images that excited me, those personal velocities one must touch in order to sing. And as we walked I found myself defining the velocities that inspired different poets. In A.E. it was a recapitulation of other-world experience ; in Yeats it seemed to be the parchment and candle of Il Pensero, a cloak threaded with the signs of the Zodiac ; in Seumas O Sullivan a more human and lovable thing, such as this autumn morning when the lives of people were leaping in at the eye. And after O Sullivan, Colum and Stephens, I came to Austin Clarke whose verse might have been written by some vigorous Son of Learning who struck the harp while remembering the Pyx, disliking both for their sedentary implications ; and then, as if by natural sympathy, to his less learned but natural brother in song, the poet I was about to meet.

To this Higgins, poetry seemed to matter as it mattered to the minor Court songsters of Elizabeth, James and Charles, a lyrical extension of the physical self in which even the muscles sought to play their part, and the poetry of ideas was deliberately discounted for the poetry of action. They are an important

tribe, those lovers of living, for though they contribute nothing directly to the great inner drama of the civilizing conscience, they fructify it by opposition, carrying on as they do into every new age the old faith of the Corybantian revellers, the belief in personal ecstasy, the *Gaudium veneris* to which the newer theologies seem so much smoke. Later, for we became quick friends though our ways were mostly apart, I found that Higgins, subconsciously, had come to recognize this Dionysian mask for his own. He was conventionally an untroubled Christian and the dream which illustrated for him the trend of his creative work, rather shocked him with its vivid illumination of the implications of his poetic role. We were in Kells, I think, when he told me of it. He had been very quiet as we jogged along through his own ripe county, but coming down that hilly street from the Round Tower, with children merry-making around us in the dusk, he unburdened himself. He was in an old curio shop, he dreamed, coming down a short flight of worn stone steps from the street, accompanied by his wife. There was something Parisian, something exceedingly knowing and sly about the aged Proprietor in his velveteen jacket and tasselled cap who met them in the dim hallway and escorted Mrs. Higgins to the long spacious room to the right where *objets d'art* were displayed anyhow on small tables. There must have been other rooms opening from that one, for Higgins, waiting passively in the hallway, was suddenly very much alone. There was a statue of a Satyr in an alcove in the shadows and he moved over to examine it. He said what struck him first was the curious nobility that seemed to underlie the conventional leer, and then as though answering his question, the statue was no longer a statue, for the eyes began to live, and on its face the bronze grew out through the green with the soft hues of living flesh. Higgins became aware of many things at once, whether through speech or not he was unable to recollect, but the way of Dionysus became to him for the first time a reality. He was more amazed than afraid, for here, no longer hidden in church rhythms, in words on a parson's tongue, in Sunday-school admonitions and warnings, was the fabled figure itself before his impact on Time had dwindled and Churchmen, adding horns and tail, had reduced him from Zagreus to that mediaeval devil that frightened our cradles. The dream, now, took on something of the quality of the Temptation in the Desert. There was the same mythic

framework, the same machinery of promises and worldly reward. And as a proof of its power to fulfil its promises, the figure of the god stepped from its pedestal and lifting an arm let loose a flood of roaring energies that seemed to shake the world. Then while the thunder was dying away in the far voids of space, the quiet everyday voices of the curio-dealer and Mrs. Higgins were heard in the next room, and the god, in some strange way, was reduced once more to a Satyr, a sly secretive figure with one ear cocked, ready for all its display of power to go underground like any other creature of the wild. But before it resumed its pedestal, it gave Higgins a long meaning glance, and implying, "you will remember I AM by this mark," laid two fingers on Higgins' wrist. At the touch, Higgins said, a wild shock of energy ran through him. And then as the curio dealer and Mrs. Higgins came to the door, the figure wrinkled and dwindled once more into an old weathered bronze standing in an alcove.

I am no interpreter of dreams, archetypal or otherwise, but sometimes they are definitely dramatisations of the dreamer's psychic position at the moment. Jung, however, found many mythological images in the dreams of his patients which had in themselves much of the symbolic content and energy attributed to them by ancient faith. But this dream of Higgins' was, I considered, just the ordinary dramatic projection of a conflict he would not admit existed in himself, for a poet must write out of his primary inclination or be dumb, and if he be a limited poet with no large range of intellect, he must of necessity select his themes out of this inclination, even if it be as Yeats declared it, at the expense of the soul's perfection :

"What theme had Homer but original sin?"

All this, however, was to be in the future. I am now remembering the almost Falstaffian figure of the poet as he descended the great staircase of the printing offices where he worked to meet two other poets out for holiday. No one would attribute psychic problems to this big man, or suspect that the mythologies were about to invade his country peace. There was an elaborate wholesome dignity in his gradual procession earthwards. A long staircase, however, will try anyone's dignity, and Higgins, jollied along by an apt quotation from Yeats, "the years like great black oxen tread the world," was quite human when he reached the last step. He was very like his work, I

thought, dark-suited and raven-haired, with a cleverly chosen jewel-like shirt that concentrated the rich bucolic light of his face. He had a very sweet smile, so sweet that the face behind it seemed to dissolve into a vague mist, timid as that fawn that trembled upon the borders of the wood. And I could see in that almost feminine softness the responsive impressionism of his work. He would never need to bother about detailed studies of objects or landscapes that interested him. Some part of him would melt and fuse with them, and reproduce them later in the flash of an image or in the drama of a phrase. And this swiftness of response, this never-ending honeymoon, was by the defect of the quality, a rare trouble to him. He was never certain that some phrase or image of his was not an echo of something he had read, and he used to go over every new poem as carefully as a seaman sounding his way to a new anchorage, cutting out everything that did not seem his very own. It was a very raw spot, this as it is with most of the poets I know, for one's worst echoes are unconscious and, when they are on the hook and fighting, always seem to be a very fine fish. I used to pull his leg about it, saying that his idiom luckily was so personal and mannered that nobody could trace a theft to him, for even Donne's line, "For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love!" suffered so great a sea-change in its passage to County Meath, that no one would recognise it in its new guise, "So shut your mouth and let me kiss the barmaid!"

At this time, he had little of his later certainty in himself. His juniors, better publicists than he, were making reputations as prose writers in England and America. And his traditional singing, with its country idiom and its inlay of homely imagery, was going out of fashion. It was a lonely time for the romantic vociferous mass-produced youngsters, with slogans and signs on their arms, were manoeuvring him out of one periodical after another. Poetry was to be a definition of the time, not of the person, it must be a cast of the fluid collective shape of changing man, it was to be everything that Higgins was not, suicidal, bored, sick of a world that was nothing but 'an old bitch gone in the teeth.' In Dublin, too, it was a time of reaction. The heroic gestures of the Civil War were dying into state pensions, and patriotic reputations were being assessed in terms of business directorships. The gaudy Twenties were gone, and

vanishing with them as the symbolic figure of Padraic O Conaire and his donkey had vanished, was the happy-go-lucky attempt to create new art modes out of the old folk-forms. Youth wanted something bitter, something to lull the tapeworm, so it turned to Elliot and dry sherry, substituting the *Thebaid* for the *Sallygarden*. Higgins was very much alone.

Then one day he told me Yeats had called on him, wandering in one afternoon when he happened not to be at home, cawing a little over a painting of A.E.'s ("He continues to paint the human figure out of his head") and wandering away again. It was the fore-runner of many visits. And soon afterwards Higgins was asked to select twenty-five of his lyrics for a Cuala Press Booklet.

I was in Dublin for much of that lovely autumn of 1933, and we spent many afternoons in Meath and Kildare. The poems were sent to the printers one at a time, and sometimes, when there was a particularly urgent S.O.S., a stanza or two at a time. Sitting on a ditch in the sun or in the brown depths of some village pub, a galley sheet would be discovered somehow in the accumulation of miscellaneous documents which he managed to house in his breast pocket, and there, under a side of salty bacon or a string of onions or a score of bicycle tyres, he would read me his poem. Many of the lyrics which eventually made up *Arable Holdings* were written or re-written about this time. I remember especially two gay pieces, *The Gallivanter's Address to his Boots and Faction*. Only the first stanza of *The Gallivanter* was written when he took it along, and he was dissatisfied with that. He had promised Miss Yeats that he would deliver the poem on the following day, so every mile that took him away from the city was an added load on his conscience. Outside Chapelizod he made me stop the car and turn back. We were to have one drink before he went home to work. And that drink produced a fairly large family, for we chose, unluckily, a popular and friendly house in the neighbourhood of Fleet Street. There as the evening wore on and the Gallivanter's adventures became richer, I caught, I think, as I had not caught before, that personal image of Higgins that beams within the exhilarating mask of his best work. He was the carefree, grotesque, wandering man of his Poems, Synge's *Playboy* and Colum's *Balladsinger* projected into a disheartened world. Every new outrageous incident we added to

the peregrinations of those seven league boots would set his huge body gurgling, and how the poem did become a reality by the following afternoon, I don't know ; but there it was, safely stowed within his overflowing breast-pocket, as we strode up Grafton Street to deliver it to Miss Yeats, a new poem, too, the metre speeded up by short unusual lines, composed by him in a single forenoon, a gay foam of fresh air and folk song, a memory of dying Ireland.

Certainly at this time his art was at its best. Yeats had stepped in at the right time and given him heart, making him feel that he counted in a world that was giving up its personality to the keeping of the gigantic new myths. Some of us, frankly, did not feel easy about the father and son relationship that was growing up swiftly between those two, for the later Yeats was diamond-like in his clear-cut intensity, and Higgins, having modelled the poet in himself from his first youth on Synge and Padraic O Conaire, had so thought himself into a single pose that any attempt to whittle it down to a new conception would have brought the knife into contact with his living flesh. I know from Higgins that Yeats never tried to lay hammer and chisel on him, but no young man, no man as susceptible to the heroic as Higgins, could live long with that gilded giant and remain unimpressed. A new Higgins did emerge eventually, a Higgins whose focus on his own folk stuff had turned from inside to outside, but this was not until *Arable Holdings* had gone through the press, not until the Abbey with its problems and squabbles was draining him of his little energy, not until he was in a local way a public figure with the onus on him to live up to it. All this, combined with the work that gave him his livelihood, left him little leisure for poetry, little leisure for that daily wrangle with nothing, with one's own nihilism, out of which poetry comes.

In the two or three months preceding the publication of *Arable Holdings*, many projected poems and many half-written poems became realities, and they are the better in their intuitive rightness for their sudden births. Later, when he was preparing the *Gap of Brightness*, he was to alter some of them, but by that time he had grown away from the life that was in them, he could only impose on them a later conception of his art, substituting drama for atmosphere, seeking words with almost a physical

appetite for their passionate significance and pictorial qualities. I think now of poems I saw grow stanza after stanza, poems like *Stations* with such a delicate lifting ending as this :

“ And here with light on the ebb
 And hooded while nursing
 The last faint glow in the web
 Of her bone, she seems
 A dusk-green bird in her dreams,
 Maybe the phoenix,
 For look in the salty darkness,
 By god, she gleams.”

For comparison, here is the stanza as it appears in *The Gap of Brightness* :

“ And so on as twilight ebbs
 She squats less human
 Cuddling a glow in her webs,
 Damn it, she seems
 A dusk-green bird in its dreams ;
 She’s maybe the phoenix—
 For look in the salty darkness,
 By god, she gleams ! ”

I dwell on this poem because it shows what he gained and lost in technique in the course of seven or eight years. The third stanza as rewritten for *The Gap of Brightness* concentrates the theme of the poem and improves it immensely as a dramatic statement, but the fourth stanza where there was unusual and accurate pictorial observation, gives way to a further and unnecessary pointing of the drama. The word ‘spidery’ has been rammed in obviously to lead up to the word ‘webs’ in the last stanza, and from the new emphasis which is thereby laid on the spider quality of the image, it becomes apparent immediately that the poet who made the alteration has lost touch with his own poem. For ‘web’ in the earlier version is as little to be identified with spiders as the phoenix is with the Black Widow. The delicate fantasy of the first wondering picture on which the poem

depended becomes complicated and blurred. And the sound pattern has lost its lightness of texture. It demanded anything but the realism of such words as 'squats' and 'cuddling' which are too heavy, too active and pictorial, to take the faint flame of the last two lines.

And the introduction of the second expletive, which deliberately toned down wonder to the key of casual interest, leaves the poem in the air. If the poet does not choose to be impressed, why the hell should he try to impress anybody else? It seems almost as if he had come to despise his material and was condescending to it.

If those revisions are in the nature of an apology to his time for his choice of material, another instance will show his deliberate maiming of himself and his art in his effort to deal realistically with material which is in itself fantastic and grotesque. The poem, *Faction*, as it appears in *Arable Holdings*, did need some slight revision because four stanzas were given to the printer before the last two were written and, with no model before him, the poet followed the rhythm, to find when the book was ready for the press that they contained eight lines each instead of seven. This, however, is really immaterial, for the last two lines of those stanzas are rhythmically the equivalent of the last line in each of the first four stanzas. The poem was important to Higgins, though he didn't think a lot of it himself, because in it he had discovered a method by which he could get in touch with the country life of his time in his own person. Up to that, although a large number of his poems are written in the first person singular, he usually spoke out of a borrowed character ; he is a Poor Girl, or an Unmarried Mother, or a wandering gossoon, or a mismanaged wife, he speaks through every romantic figure but his own. In *Faction*, for once, he used folk material on his own level, and the poem, as it is printed in *Arable Holdings*, is a success because in the final stanza he allowed his fantasy the rein, turning, with a nice easy twist, the 'squat hairy stevedore' of the quarrel into that active mediaeval demon who takes bits out of the countryside here and there and leaves his hoof tracks on the hills. It is this final hint that makes the poem a good poem ; without it, it is a cock without a comb, a mere incident of versified journalism.

On that day, as we three walked out of Thom's and turned to the bookstalls on the Liffey where Higgins wanted to buy—

above all things—a history of the Connaught Rangers, I sensed a good deal of what was to happen between us, but not this final severance between a poet and his real material. For a number of years he was to welcome me on my flying visits to Dublin, lumbering into the back snug of the pub where I waited for him, his huge heartiness belying the extreme sensitiveness of his nature. He would order his glass and sit down, tapping my pockets, using a phrase like, “Out with it, man, out with that bobby I hear squalling ! ” He was always the eager critic, realistic and hard, showing no mercy to what wasn’t good. The good could be better, the better best. Verse, then, I think was almost his life. You could see a phrase sinking into him like a stone into a pool. But I felt about him often that he would escape from the mental drudgery of it, if circumstances favoured, into something easier that would bring a more immediate response. He was an active man, with farming ancestors, tied to a sedentary body, unsure of himself in those years, terrified of being what he called ‘a mere poet of atmosphere,’ beginning to be troubled about the impression he was making on his time. He confessed this to A.E. and myself one night at Rathgar Road, and I was satisfied to see A.E. bristling, for Higgins in his eyes could never be a failure. But as the reassuring peroration advanced (not as Dublin wits might have it—by way of agricultural organization) to that mythic world wherein all poets, major and minor, have an equal footing, I noticed too that Higgins wasn’t interested any longer in a mystic interpretation of his art. He wanted results, now, as a business man wants his profits or a politician a seat in the cabinet, he wanted an art by which he could batter a way through the hordes of the Philistines, poetry with bombs in every line that would make his voice the dominant noise of a noisy age. Yet his job, as I saw it and as A.E. saw it, was to do what he had set himself to do in the first place, to express the live male spirit of country Ireland which is not always left outside the heart when men uncap themselves at the chapel door. That spirit is a limited current coinage, it is a reality that must be delivered in its own folk form, and this folk form is permissible as the imitation of fashionable techniques is not permissible because the problems propounded social and spiritual, come out of a totally different environment. The only real provincialism is imitation.

And Higgins was doing this job well. Poems like the *Blackthorn Stick*, *Repentance* and *Faction*, and the elegies, *Padraic O Conaire* and *Father and Son* show how close to the body he could cut the country freize and still be himself, a person moving easily within an established convention in the way that an anonymous mediaeval stonemason might carve his own features among the wings and gargoyles of a growing cathedral. He would have been a greater poet in the end had he continued to identify himself with this first conception of his role, had he carried forward the technical discoveries he was making in such poems as *The Blackthorn Stick* and *Father and Son* where his new prose rhythms dragged the folk tune into something very personal to him, and the slow line meandered till it filled its banks and was ready to marry the great glitter of the sea.

Yes, up to the end of 1934 he was doing this well. And it was around this time, I think, that he ceased to inhabit the gorgeous cattle-jobber silhouette that was so much a part of his stock-in-trade. Before him, now, was the urban future he had renounced a few years before to live in Mayo, four or five years in which he would be occupied with the politics of letters rather than with literature itself, manager of a famous dead theatre, secretary to the Irish Academy of Letters, nervous years in which he had to patch up his mask anew to meet the demands of an important middle age, years in which he finally laid aside his primary image of himself as folk poet while still clinging to its external conventions and that robust idiom that is so unsuited to the sober in-looking attitude of our suburban time. I don't think he would ever have tuned himself to this reverie of ours where argument eternally grinds on argument, where there is defeat oftener than victory, where the struggle for expression is the expression of the whole psychic man, the struggle that is to be found in the best poetry of the age but is most personal in *The Tower* and *The Winding Stair* and the later poetry of Austin Clarke where the images glimmer in the crypts and there is terror in the faint candlelight that struggles on the altar. He was rather like the acrobat in the story who must worship in his own way; but when his gay tumbling went out of fashion, he had nothing to substitute for it.

But O it was a gay gallant fellow who lived inside the jobber's hat those times we used to wander the streets and the country

roads, and who still lives within the covers of that lovely Cuala booklet he inscribed for me back in 1933.

“They'll miss his heavy stick and stride in Wicklow,
 His story talking down Winetavern street
 Where old men sitting in the wizen daylight
 Have kept an edge upon his gentle wit ;
 And women on the grassy streets of Galway
 Who harken for his passing but in vain
 Shall hardly tell his step as shadows vanish
 Through archways of forgotten Spain.”

“SAY COULD THAT LAD BE I ?”

By Mary Lavin

THIS is my father's story. It isn't mine at all. I wrote it down one night so soon after hearing him tell it that I remembered every word. My father is not a man to bother writing a thing down, unless it's a message to pin on the stable door for the herd, or the boy that feeds the dogs. He's not exactly a talking man either, unless about horses and hurdles. Most of his yarning goes on in his head while he walks the Meath fields, or leans over the gate of a yellow pasture. When I am in Dublin I think of him as I have so often seen him, standing in a dusty yellow field, or a green field tufty with clover clumps, staring at a cropping beast, or just walking along scotching thistles with a walking-stick.

My father is always busy with his hands, tying back a rambling brier that would scratch the eyes out of the galloping colts, or pulling down the choking strings of ivy from the bark of a young beech. In Meath a man must restrain the lovely fertile land, or it would strangle him with its greenery. But in Roscommon, where my father was born, the fields capriciously point up their chaste rocks through the grass and defy man to win them wholly to his way.

Poverty in the west of Ireland has the dignity of a losing cause well fought. When my father talks of his barefooted

boyhood in blue Roscommon, it seems very far away. He seems to be a different person from the boy he tells me about. Perhaps we are different people, all of us, from the children we once were, as we are different people from the men we dream ourselves to be. Perhaps when we sit and think of things we did long ago, there is no idle egotism in our musings, but rather the unselfishness of thoughts about another person, a person we once knew.

I think my father finds it hard himself to believe that the boy he calls to mind was once himself, as hard as that boy would have found it to believe, had he had the power to look ahead, that he would one day be this wise and quiet man who couldn't want to cross a stile if there were a gate, and who could go out into a field at evening time just to stare at the grass and want no more.

But if he doubts that the lad he remembers could be himself, the story about that lad is his. As I have said it is not mine. It is his, even in the way one word goes before another.

"Did I ever tell you about a dog I had?" my father asked, "a dog by the name of White Prince. He was the wonderfulest dog in the world. He was a cross between a wire-haired terrier and a blood hound, and he was pure white, with the hair bristling on him when he smelled a fight. A dog was no good to a fellow in those days if he wasn't a good fighting dog. That was all we kept dogs for; to set them on each other. Every fellow in the village had a dog, and the fellow that had a dog to beat all the other dogs was a fellow that was looked up to over the whole countryside.

I used to have great dogs. But White Prince was about the best I ever had. One day I was sent over the fields to my grandmother's house, that was seven miles away from where my own mother lived. I set off over the fields, whistling, and kicking sods of dry grass that were thrown up by the hooves of a clattering mare that was always breaking loose over anyone and everyone's few acres. I brought the white dog along with me for company. I wasn't going to go seven miles without him, although my grandmother hated the sight of him, and well I knew it.

We got to my grandmother's house about two o'clock in the afternoon. I remember well it was drawing in towards winter and the evenings were getting very short. Although it was

only two o'clock, the night was beginning to show in the sky already. My grandmother was sitting on the side of an old settle bed, and she said she was sitting there waiting for me for the last two hours. I came to do her messages for her in the next village, that was further along the road, but nearer a lot than the one I came out of, all the same.

“Take care would you think of taking that blaggard of a dog into the village with you,” said the old lady. She knew he'd fight every dog in the village and that he wouldn't come home till he did; nor me either.

“And take care would you think of leaving him here either,” she said as an after-thought.

I didn't know what to do. I thought it over for maybe a minute, and I decided that perhaps it was just as well not to bring my brave fighter into a village that was strange to him. I got a sudden idea. I called the dog into the house and waited till my grandmother turned to the dresser to get out her knitting. Then I went out quickly, stopping the dog from coming after me by blocking the door with the butt of my boot. When I was outside and the door shut I drew down the hasp. There used to be a hasp on the outside of the door on most houses, and when it was caught down no one who was inside could get out. It seems queer, now that I come to think of it, but it seemed the most natural thing in the world then.

When I put down the hasp my grandmother and the dog were locked inside, and my mind was at rest on one score anyway. My grandmother was a kind woman at heart, and even if that was not the case, she was very feeble, and so I knew that she wouldn't lift a hand to the dog. There was only one thing she would do to him if she could, and that was the one thing I made it so that she couldn't do! She couldn't let him out and stray him on me.

I went down the pebbly lane, whistling, and as happy as could be, jingling the coins in my trouser pocket and feeling a very big fellow, when all was said and done. I was only half way down the lane, when I heard a shower of splintering sounds behind me, and I looked around in time to see my fighting dog come leaping out into the air from a gaping hole in the window, glittering with sparks of broken glass, and leaving behind him on the still two reeling pots of red geraniums.

I didn't take time to stop, but I went running down the lane, not a whistle in my throat, and White Prince barking and yelping and snapping at my heels with his pride and his joy and his devilment. The more I ran the more frightened I got, and the more the dog ran the more excited he got. When we came in sight of the village I stopped running and sat down on a stile, and took out the silver shilling my grandmother gave me and the five heavy coppers. Fast and all as we ran I hadn't lost the money. I looked at it for a long time and I felt a bit better then, and I felt some of the importance creeping back into me that I felt when I set out from the door after putting back the hasp. I started to compose in my mind the way I'd ask in the shop for my messages, but when I tried to remember what they were I couldn't for the life of me remember as much as one of them. I was afraid to go back and ask my grandmother to tell me them again.

I'll get her tea and sugar, I decided, and a loaf of bread, and if there's any money left, I'll get her a piece of bacon. She'll be so mad about the broken window when I go back, she won't open the messages till after I'm gone. I was sorry I reminded myself of the broken window, because the thought of it gave me a queer feeling. I looked around at the dog, thinking to give him a kick by way of thanks for all the trouble he got me into, but he was sitting in the middle of the road looking up at me, with his head cocked to one side and his ear cocked up the other side. I hadn't a heart to touch him. I couldn't think to do anything more than give him a whistle to get up and come along with me, and we made for the main street of the village, walking along together as great pals as ever we were.

It was dark by this time and the lamps were being lit in the shop windows. I could see the dark shadows of the shop-boys kneeling into the window spaces in every shop, trimming up the wick and striking matches and putting down the globes over the flame. The lights were hanging from the ceilings, and after they were lit, they swung back and forth for a few minutes, sending big unnatural shadows of the boys and the things on the window out over the path, in a way that would make you scared to look at them. I looked into the shops instead, where the steady yellow lights on the walls were comfortable and homely, and the crinkly tin reflectors behind them reminded me of the kitchen at my grandmothers.

I went into the biggest shop in the street. It was a drapery shop on one side, but on the other side they sold tea and sugar and bread, and boxes of things, and sweets in jars, and a good many things that I never saw anywhere else but there. There was a window on the grocery side, and it was filled with plates of raisins and plates of flour, and plates of rice and plates of prunes. The window on the drapery side was filled with ladies' bonnets and caps, and yards of lace and coloured tape and strings of bootlaces in black and brown. I liked doing messages in this big shop. We hadn't any as big as it in our own village. I liked looking into the glass cases, and I liked looking at the big lamps as long as they were still and not swinging their shadows over me. Most of all I liked listening to the whirl and spin of the great ball of twine inside the tin canister with the hole in it, everytime the shop-boy gave the end of the string a tug and drew out enough to tie up a parcel. And I liked the noise of the money rattling about in the drawer under the counter, when he drew it out to give someone change.

This evening I was so happy looking around me and taking notice of everything, I didn't heed what my brave fighter was doing for himself. He was smelling around when I saw him last, and, as long as no other dog came into the shop, I felt it was safe enough to let him smell around all he liked. But, as I was leaning on the counter watching the boy making up the price of my messages, I felt something bristly brush by my bare legs, and I looked down in time to see the white stump of my bold dog's tail disappearing under the counter. There was a space between two of the counters, so that shop boys could get in and out if they wanted, but there was a board across the opening, so that you had to lift it up to get in or out. That kept out people that had no business behind the counter, because you couldn't raise up the board without causing attention. It gave a creak and, as well as that, it darkened over the side of the shop for a minute while it was being lifted. You could be leaning on the board when it was down and you might never know there was a passage underneath you all the time, if you didn't happen to look close. But White Prince wasn't the sort to miss much, and he didn't miss the half door in the counter. He went inside, and I held my breath.

He was very quiet for a long time, then all of a sudden one

of the boys bent down to pick up a penny he let drop, and he must have seen the white stump of a tail wagging away in the delight of the darkness under the shelves, because he let a yell out of him. He yelled at the poor dog and started ordering him to get out of there, stamping his feet and waving a sweeping brush at him that he picked up in a fit of rage. I don't know what he caught the poor dog doing, but whatever it was it must have been something he shouldn't have been doing, because the fellow was in a terrible temper. He was yelling at the dog to get out, but he was standing up against the hole in the counter blocking the way out all the time he was yelling, and I suppose the poor dog thought he was cornered. I suppose he was sure and certain the fellow would kill him with the big brush he was waving at him. You never know what an animal is thinking, but they have very clever ideas. When White Prince saw there was no regular way out I suppose he started planning on getting out some irregular way. I suppose he said to himself if a trick is worth doing once its worth doing twice! Anyway however it was with the dog in his own mind, the next thing I saw was the flashing fighter rising up in the air and leaping into the window, knocking the bonnets right and left and slapping up against the glass with a crash. There was a worse sound of splintering than I heard a while before in the lane at my grandmother's, and there was a ten-times heavier shower of splinters as he went flying out into the street with his four paws stiff out under him and streamers of lace and ribbon and tape trailing out after him into the yellow square of path that was lit up by the shop lamps. I was struck cold with fright. I couldn't lift up a foot from the boards of the floor, much less get out of the shop. I thought as true as God I'd be put in prison for life. The shop was in an uproar, everyone running out and shouting and holding up their hands and whistling for the dog to come back with one breath, and with another calling God to witness what they'd do to him if he did. They were shading their hands and looking out into the blackness of the road the way the dog went. You could easy see the way he went, because he left a streal of muddy tapes and bonnet-strings behind him half way out into the road, and maybe further down the road too, if it was bright enough to see, but it wasn't. The shop-keeper himself was dividing his time between shaking his fist into the dark and running over to the window and

pushing pack the bonnets and blouses through the hole in the glass.

There was a terrible lot of talk, I needn't tell you. Everyone was asking everyone else how much they thought the cost of the glass would be, and the women were asking each other if they thought the things that got muddy would be sold off cheap. I could hear the talk, coming in through the open door, and I suppose the hole in the window make it sound louder inside too. I heard everything without going out. I was afraid to put one foot before another in the direction of the door or the window. I never once questioned the fear that was chilling me into stupidity, the fear of being cuffed off to prison as soon as the boy came back with the dog. I might have run off like the dog, if I had my change, but I thought it as bad to go back to my grandmother without that as I did to go to prison with the dog. So, I just stood still and waited, and, when there was nothing being said worth listening to, I just cursed the dog and planned what I'd do to him when I got him again. But the thought that I might never get him again softened some of the punishments into pats on the head and, if I could only have got out of the place with my change, I wouldn't have hurt a hair on his head when I found him. There was a sound of hammering, after a bit, and I saw the shop-keeper nailing up boards over the broken window, and then he came in and threw me a piece of paper, and pushed over a bottle of ink to me with a pen sticking up in it, and said I was at school long enough to know how to write. Write down "business as usual," he said. But the boy that had gone looking for the dog came back, and took the pen out of my hand and wrote it himself. His breath was bursting his ribs, and he leaning over the counter writing, and I thought to myself that, if only I had my change, now was my time to beat it while the chap was winded. "Wait a minute, young fellow," he said to me just then, "I'll have your change for you in a tick."

It didn't sound by the way he spoke, as if he was going to put me to prison. Maybe they're only going to go for the dog, I thought, and I felt sorrier than ever for White Prince. "Here's your change," said the boy, "See is it right, I don't remember quite what I had to take out of it."

We counted over the parcels again and found the change was right. I started for the door, but just as I got near it the

shopkeeper let a bawl out of him : "Come here," he said, "Come here, young fellow. Which way are you going out of the town ?" I was too stiff to answer him, so he went on, " Whichever way it is anyway," said he, " keep an eye out for a tinker with a white dog. I'll give you sixpence if you come back with news of him."

" I'll bet its worth more than sixpence to him to find out who owns that dog !" said one of the people outside as I went through the crowd. " He was white all to an odd spot of black, I think," said the shop-keeper, coming to the door and shouting out after me. " He was all white, sir," I said before I felt myself saying it. " There was no black on him at all."

" Is that so ?" said the man, " Well it's good to know that. You've a good pair of eyes." He stopped and looked at me. That information is worth something I think ?" he said looking around at the customers and thinking to encourage some of them to give me some information about the dog. " That information is worth a bag of sweets anyway," he said, and he went inside and filled up a white tissue bag so full that the mitred mouth of it was too full to close over, and so he swung the bag over and over by the two top edges, till it had too little ears sticking up on it. But the ears made me think of the dog, the way he was sitting on the road when we stopped outside the village, and I wished again that I'd given the clips I was planning on. I took hold of the bag of sweets though, and I pelted off down the road towards my grandmother's, and I can tell you it was no snail's pace I went, when I got round the corner.

According as the road between me and the shop was growing longer, the thought of the broken window of the shop was getting less troublesome ; but according as the road between me and my grandmother's house was getting shorter, the thought of her broken window was getting blacker before my eyes. But I was so glad to be out of the village anyway, and I was glad the dog had gone home too, because it would have ruined everything if he came running up to me wagging his tail before I got out of the place. If he did that there wouldn't be one that wouldn't know he was my dog, and there wouldn't be one that wouldn't be after me. I'd have no chance at all against so many, and some of them with bicycles.

" I'm glad he went home," I said to myself. " I hope he doesn't lose himself."

I didn't need to worry. As I came out of the village past the last tree before the open fields, I heard a growling in the dark ahead of me and a scuffling on the gravelly road. The nearer I got the louder the snarling got, but no matter how loud it got, the loudest snarl in all the snarling was the snarling of White Prince. As I got near, the fighting fury of the dogs' my eyes got used to the dark, and I saw White Prince shining white against the hedge on the side of the road. He was up on a rise of the ditch bank, and there was a half-circle of dogs around him and he was barking at them and baring his teeth. Not one of the other dogs would go an inch nearer to him, but not one of them would go an inch back from him either. The White Prince heard my footsteps, I think, because he took courage. He gave a fiercer snarl than any that went before, and he picked up something in his teeth from the grass beside him and made off suddenly down the road, with all the other dogs after him barking fit to wake the dead. That was the very way I put it to myself that night, I remember. “Let them wake every corpse that ever was planted,” I said to myself, “as long as they don't draw down the living on me.” And I looked back at the last few lights of the village, that winked through the hedges at me. I ran after the dogs and I caught up with them after a bit. White Prince had stopped again and run up on another mound of the ditch. The half circle of mangey curs was around him again. He left down his precious load, whatever it was, and gave me a look as much as to say “What are you standing there for? Beat off these devils of dogs, will you, and come and look at what I have here!” I felt it was time, right enough, to put a stop to things as they were, and I took up a stick and began to beat off the dogs. It was no easy job, but they went off one by one, and left only one lanky yellow cur that was as hard to shake off as twenty dogs. He slunk off forty times and he slunk back again another forty times, till at last I got a good crack at him by throwing the stick out of my hand. He let out a yell at the scudding clouds and off with him where he came from.

“Come on now, you!” I said to White Prince, and I started off for my grandmother's house. I forgot that he had been carrying something, but after a while I began to think it strange that he wasn't frisking along in front of me, and I thought, too, that he was making a dragging sort of noise behind me. I looked

around, and there was the poor dog, staggering under the weight of something big and bulky that he had hanging out of his jaws.

"What have you there, you blaggard?" I said, and he dropped it down at my feet. What do you think it was?—A big leg of mutton! White Prince stared up at me. His little bright eyes were glinting at me, and his tail was wagging like a bush in the wind.

I was ready to kill him there and then on the road for the robber and thief he was, when all of a sudden I remembered my grandmother who was waiting for me, and I remembered too that she might still be hasped into the house, which would make her ten times madder with me than before. I got an idea.

"Good dog!" I said, patting him on the head.

"Come on!" I shouted, jumping up on the ditch and over the stile in the wall with the parcels under one arm and the leg of mutton under the other.

May God forgive me, I washed that leg of mutton in a stream of clear spring water, and before my grandmother had time to know that I was inside the house at all I had the leg of mutton planted down on the kitchen table. While she was exclaiming about it, I ran out again where the white fighter was waiting for me, and half a hundred stars as well, that had slipped out without my noticing them. We went home again over the fields, and I remember well noticing that the hoof-cuts in the fields had filled in with rain during the shower that we had missed while we were inside the shop, and there seemed to be a star in every rut. I was very happy, too, I remember, and the white dog ran along with me as giddy as the stars in the puddles. If that dog was as happy as me, he had no conscience either.

POET-CRITICS AND CRITIC-POETS IN ANCIENT GREECE

By W. B. Stanford

IT has been well said that the best intellectual gift of the ancient Greeks was that of asking intelligent and provocative questions.

They often failed to answer them and often answered them wrongly, but they set men thinking in fruitful ways for many

centuries, and some of their problems are puzzling and interesting still. They were like outspoken, imaginative children in their attitude to life, not ashamed to reveal ignorance and not over-reverential towards received opinions. An anecdote in Plato's *Timaeus* illustrates this: when Solon, the wisest of the older generations of Athenians, visited Egypt and told one of the priests something about the Greek view of things, the priest, superior, as he thought, in his thousands of years of ancestral lore, replied "O Solon, Solon, you Greeks are always children, none of you ever grows old . . . your souls are always youthful . . . scorning old doctrine and ancient tradition and precepts hoary with antiquity." But Europe is now more indebted and grateful to the childlike Greeks than to the patriarchal Egyptians.

Nowadays the Greeks' questions in the applied sciences seem naive, because of modern progress in machinery and instruments. But it is otherwise with literature and the arts. In these our best in theory and execution is no better and no fresher than theirs. They succeed especially well in the theory and practice of poetry thanks to the subtlety of their sense of music and melody, their fine feeling for satisfying form, and their wide-sweeping imaginations. Their achievements in literary criticism are most commonly known through Aristotle's *Poetics*, with its tantalizing enigmas of katharsis and mimesis, and through the treatise formerly known as *Longinus on the Sublime*. This second, less celebrated now, was immensely popular in polite society during the eighteenth century. Edmund Burke, who would have read it in his classical course at T.C.D., imitated it in his *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*.

But it is not the intention here to review the work of the better-known Greek literary critics whose names appear in every academic history of criticism and whose writings are easily accessible in annotated translations. Instead, the earlier, scattered views of pre-Aristotelian Greek writers will be considered—more interesting in a way because they mostly consist of offhand remarks by poets on their own trade, not, like later views, shaped and modified to fit any abstract hypothesis. Two different problems will emerge. They are: "What is poetry for?" and, "Where does the poetic talent come from?"—in other words, the unsolved and probably insoluble problems of the purpose and nature of poetry.

Homer begins literary theory as well as literary practice in Europe. His invocations to the Muses at critical moments, if they are not merely conventional, imply that he accepted a traditional view that inspiration comes from heaven. Yet his own poetry far from being a spontaneous linnet-song shows many traces of a highly sophisticated hereditary technique. His few references to poets are propagandist. In the *Odyssey* he describes the proper treatment for them—ample food and wine, courteous attendance and attention, and freedom to sing or not according to their inclination. He describes the court poet of the Phaeacians as blind (this became conventional and was later applied to Homer himself) and singing from his repertory of historical ballads and Rabelaisian burlesques at the banquets when he has eaten and drunk well himself. It is not stated whether his lays were improvisations or not, but one is reminded of Housman's tendency to find poetic inspiration after a good glass of beer at lunch. Elsewhere Homer states his notion of the function of poetry which is primarily to give pleasure and secondarily to perpetuate deeds of fame. Its pleasure is twofold : it charms the ear and mind with pleasant or exciting sounds and concepts, and it soothes disagreeable emotions. So in the *Iliad* when Achilles is angry he consoles himself by singing a *chanson de geste* to his own accompaniment on the lyre, just as a Chinese philosopher has recommended poetic composition as an emotional sedative. Occasionally there are glimpses of more primitive uses of poetic formulae. In one place incantations are used to staunch a wound. The Seirens in the *Odyssey* sing the first of many spell-songs in European literature (to be followed later by the "Binding-song" sung by the Erinyes in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and a haunting love-spell in Theocritus). There are further traces of supernatural uses for poetry, as when Homer describes the effect of his verse in ex-magical terms that have scarcely lost their original force as much as our similar "charming" and "enchanting." Homer's attitude to his art, then, is chiefly professional and hedonistic with a consciousness of some magical power and historical value. His ultimate consolation for his heroes when they wonder why they suffer in their epic conflicts is the promise of lasting fame—no idle promise, as time has shown.

A different attitude begins with Hesiod about fifty years after Homer, that is, many scholars now think, about 850-800

B.C. Hesiod, the first utilitarian and didactic poet, complains that much of poetry is lies, though he admits its power to soothe pain and to banish painful memories. In deliberate rivalry with the Homeric school he sets out to write poems of strict theological, moral and social value. Although he retains the epic hexameter with much of its vigour and sensuous appeal, he aims at instruction instead of pleasure. His reaction from the polished, glamorous epic type of poem may be due to a social difference. Homer was a court poet content, as Bentley said, with small earnings and good cheer. Hesiod was the struggling son of a struggling emigrant farmer, fiercely independent, censorious of the ruling class, preaching and praying for social justice and moral integrity. In fact, he stands in respect to Homer as Lucretius does to Virgil, or as a modern Marxian poet to a Victorian laureate.

The contrast between the two types was clear from very early times. Soon it was dramatized (though hardly for theatrical performance) in a *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*. The extant version, which is very late, contains a competition between the two in technical skill, practical wisdom, and curious learning. All the spectators adjudge Homer worthy of the victor's crown, but the presiding king gives the verdict for Hesiod because he was the poet of peace and agriculture while Homer sang of war and arms—a victory for ethics over art. These poetic contests grew to great importance in the history of Greek literature, clearly disproving the belief that competition, though the life of business, is the death of fine art. Poetic and choral competitions became features of many religious festivals. At these, poets would recite their best compositions, paeans for Apollo, dithyrambs for Bacchus, maiden-songs for Artemis ; while rhapsodists competed in reciting well-known epic passages. Meanwhile a less sophisticated form of competition also developed in the bucolic singing-matches between shepherds and goatherds, which were later used by Theocritus to create the pastoral genre. Another celebrated poetic contest is that between Aeschylus and Euripides for the Chair of Tragedy in Hades staged by Aristophanes in his *Frogs*—a masterpiece of parody and burlesque. In it Aristophanes favours the opinion that the primary function of poetry is to make men brave soldiers and good citizens. So Aeschylus easily wins.

But besides raising the standard of poetic skill these local poetic competitions had another result. At them the judges (in

Greek *kritai* hence our *critic*) had to be able to grade poets in order of merit, first, second, third, a process which tends to lead to arbitrary classification of literary incommensurables such as has been properly ridiculed by Stephen Potter in *The Muse in Chains*. At times the decisions were short-sighted and some of the best plays of antiquity, including Aristophanes' *Birds*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and Euripides' *Medea*, failed to win first prizes. At the same time poets were tempted to write to please the judges instead of sincerely following their own standards of art. But in spite of its failings, it must be admitted that some of the best poetry of Greece was written for competition.

Hesiod's attack on the hedonistic and fabulous aspects of poetry was resumed far more virulently in the sixth century B.C., this time on ethical grounds. Xenophanes, himself a professional poet and rhapsodist, complained that Homer and even Hesiod depicted the gods in immoral situations. This was true to some degree, for the Greek gods in early times were depicted as anthropomorphic in all respects with the passions and weaknesses of men and superior only in power and splendour. But it would be grossly untrue to say that Homer's portrayal of the Olympians was in general tendency indecent or obscene. Xenophanes' attack, in fact, was the beginning of the censorious opposition to realism in art. An attempt to frustrate it was made by some critics with the suggestion that these parts of Homer was allegorical and not literal, Athena being wisdom, Ares brute force, Aphrodite passionate desire, but this pleased neither poets nor puritans. Much more dangerously two centuries later Plato renewed the crusade against unethical poetry. (His forcibly expressed views are still to be read in a much distorted form almost weekly in Irish journals.) He begins gently in his *Ion* by examining the nature of poetry to see whether it is a matter of skill and science or something supernatural and irrational. He decides that in the act of creation the poet is possessed by a spirit outside himself and blindly follows its dictates. Inspiration, in fact, is a mild form of madness :

" For all good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed. And as the Corybantian revellers when they dance are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets are not in their right mind when they are composing their beautiful strains ; but when falling under the power of music and

metre they are inspired and possessed ; like Bacchic maidens who draw milk and honey from rivers when they are under the influence of Dionysus but not when they are in their right mind. And the soul of the lyric poet does the same, as they themselves say ; for they tell us that they bring songs from honeyed fountains, culling them out of the gardens and dells of the Muses ; they, like the bees, winging their way from flower to flower. And this is true. For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing ; and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him : when he has not attained to this state, he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles." (*Jowett's translation*).

He goes on to say that poets may sometimes speak the truth nobly, but unlike the dialecticians, they never know why or when. In fact the poet resembles a magnet with innate inexplicable powers of drawing and holding an audience.

This is all genial enough, but later in the *Republic* he launches a major offensive. Poetry belittles the gods and heroes ; acting in drama is deleterious to the actor's personality ; and nearly all types of poetry encourage the dangerous irrational elements in men. Further, a metaphysical argument this, the phenomena of the world are shadows of the Eternal Ideas ; since poetry imitates earthly life, it must, therefore, be the shadow of a shadow, two removes from reality. His conclusion is that all poetry except hymns and panegyrics of good men should be expelled from the ideal state. In a later work, the *Laws*, he slightly modified this, allowing tragedy and comedy under a strict censorship, but his hostility to artistic freedom remains fully as intense.

Plato's is the severest and most serious attack on the nature and functions of poetry ever made. It is a paradox that one with so graceful and sensuous a style of his own could have ever conceived it. Perhaps the tradition that he was an eager poet himself until he was converted to philosophy by Socrates explains some of its fanatical fervour. Some of his arguments were answered by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, but Aristotle's sane and objective realism is too dispassionate, even academic, ever to have made much popular headway against Plato's glowing zeal. In contemporary discussions one aspect of Plato's case is generally forgotten. In the words of E. E. Sikes in *The Greek View of Poetry* (to which this essay owes much) " It is remarkable, at least, that he lays no stress on the indecency which has offended many modern admirers of Aristophanes. Perhaps it would be

more remarkable if he *had* protested ; for the attitude of to-day (or at least yesterday) is largely due to a change of manners rather than of morals. Aristophanes of course is Rabelaisian ; but here the last word was said by Coleridge on Rabelais : ' the morality of his work is of the most refined and exalted kind ; as for his manners, to be sure, I cannot say much.' "

Far from being the consummation of Greek literary criticism, Plato's general attitude to poetry is so thoroughly unGreek that it would be entirely misleading to end with it here. Some views expressed by poets a century before him in the heyday of Greek are more typical—Pindar's for example. He was the supreme poets' poet of Greece, a brilliant master of rhythm, diction, and imagery in a fashion incapable of anything near adequate translation, least of all in so-called Pindaric odes in English. Writing for wealthy and often *parvenus* patrons without the obsequiousness or flattery that Horace and Ovid showed, he preserved his spiritual integrity by proclaiming that true poets, like himself, were the mouthpieces of Apollo, priests of the Muses. The poet deserves almost divine reverence as a prophet or a hierophant endowed with mystic vision of truth. This is a long step from the simple "singer" of Homeric times or even the mere "maker" implied in the later word *poietes*. But Pindar carried off the role well enough ; his character, diction and moderation impressed all. A younger contemporary had less luck, if we can believe a late anecdote. This was Empedocles, the poet-physician of Sicily, who pressed Pindar's hierophantic attitude so far that he began to believe, or at least to try to make others believe, that he was not just a priest but a very god himself. At first he was satisfied with what he thought were suitably godlike clothes and conduct. Then as he grew old he decided on a desperate proof. He told his friends that he would ascend Etna and thence be translated to heaven. His friends watched him go and were duly impressed when he never was seen again. But unluckily his shoes had been shod with metal, and soon afterwards the volcano cast one of them up again, revealing that his apotheosis was self-incurred.

Another poet of Pindar's age, Simonides, who might still be ranked as high as the Theban if enough of his work had survived, left a bad literary aphorism behind him

Poetry is vocal painting ; painting is silent poetry.

Its emphasis on the visual imagination is exaggerated, and Plutarch bettered it with

Poetry is vocal dancing ; dancing is silent poetry,

wisely implying that poetic rhythms and images are essentially dynamic and kinaesthetic, not static and immobilised.

Let one refreshing, practical maxim end this account of ancient attitudes and opinions on poetry. It was Pindar who said, and it is a saying as typically characteristic as Solon's story above,

Praise old wine and new songs.

THE WOMAN FROM LEAMLARA

By Margaret O'Leary

ALL her life, as long as the people of Leamlara could remember, she had been talking about Dublin, rolling off the names and the descriptions of the public buildings as if she actually knew them ; and when a remote cousin was appointed curate there, she included him and his grand, big, beautiful, stone church and house in Ardfoyle Road. The people listened to her with patience because they had respect for her. Since the death of her husband, in the first year of her marriage nearly fifty years before, she had never stirred away from home except to go to Mass ; and she managed her farm and two workmen so well that she was often held up as an example by irate wives to erring husbands. But when, at the age of sixty-eight, she sold her place to go to live in Dublin, the people had no longer any respect for her. They blamed her long widowhood ; her childlessness ; her thrift ; her over-concentration on her work ; for her folly.

She managed the sale of her farm and the arrangements for her journey and lodgings in Dublin with her usual efficiency. She bought an entire set of new clothes, black as suitable for her age and condition, and gave all her other clothes, hitherto so carefully preserved, to the priest for the poor. The only spot of colour she allowed herself in her dress was her bright red woollen gloves. Of these she had several pairs which, the neighbours

found to their amazement, she had been knitting and storing for years in preparation for her residence in Dublin.

She had arranged to rent a furnished room in Aungier Street, selected from the many answers to her advertisement, because it was cheap and near Dublin Castle. She got there from the Kingsbridge Station without any difficulty in a taxi. It was a front room, on the first floor, over a shop.

For the first few days she sat all day at one of the windows, peeping behind the dirty lace curtains at the shops and the endless line of traffic in the street below. Seeing her like that, the landlady, a thin faded woman of forty, said in the tired voice of a person trying to make polite conversation : "I suppose you don't know Dublin at all ?"

"Eyah, child, I do. I know Dublin as well as I know myself." Then craning forward again to peep, "But 'tis all so strange. So different. I must get it all straightened out before I go to see the places and the people that I know."

After a few days she ventured out. She had never been in a crowded street before, so for some minutes she stood still, dazed, looking from left to right. Then, her heart panting, she made a sudden dash to a shop window and stood in front of it, her back to the people. It was a chandler's ; and the window was packed with goods. At first she saw nothing distinctly. Then with pleasure she noted the familiar articles, naming each and its price, and commenting inwardly on them with the skilled house-keeper's knowledge. That window finished, she went on to the next, a grocer's, and did the same thing. Her whole morning was spent in critically examining half a dozen shop windows. Returning to her lodgings about one o'clock she moved along with the crowd, now denser and more hurried than earlier, calm and self-confident.

By degrees she ventured farther, leaving behind her the small stuffy shops of Aungier Street, and came to shops with windows as large as a house front and wide deep entrances. She stood at one of these entrances, watching people go in and out, craning forward when the glass doors were opened to see what was inside. One day she slipped in with some people, glancing out of the corner of her eye at a tall man in a blue uniform who closed the door behind her. She walked along carpeted passages between counters on which stood bales of beautiful materials ;

into carpeted apartments in which stood wax figures wearing beautiful clothes ; into others with displays of underclothing so flimsy and dainty that she had to cover her mouth with her red-gloved hand to hide her smile. She came every day to that beautiful shop and walked leisurely around, standing in front of anything that pleased her and admiring it as long as she liked. Then, one day, when she had been standing for some time admiring green velvet curtains, an elderly man came to her, and addressing her as Madam, said something which she did not understand. She thought he was making an objection, so she gave him a frightened look and hurried out. She never went back again.

After that she stayed in her lodgings for some days, not sitting at the window as before, but at the fire, her back to the window. And she spoke very little to the landlady. When she did, in a low meditative voice as if to herself, it was of Leamlara and the life there ; recalling the time that her cousin Father Pat Ryan spent his holidays there as a schoolboy.

"And a wild young devil he was, ma'am ; never off an ass's back. Morning, noon, and night, wherever you'd meet him, he'd be on an ass's back." Then suddenly bristling : "And why wouldn't he, ma'am ? Why wouldn't he ? For 'tis grand fine asses there's in Leamlara. Every bit as big as jinnets."

But when the landlady, endeavouring to appear interested, asked her where Father Pat Ryan was living now, she seemed reluctant to tell. She hesitated some minutes before replying in a low voice : "He's living here in Dublin, ma'am."

"And do you know where ? "

"Indeed I do, ma'am."

"And have you been to see him ? "

A long pause, and then : "No, ma'am ; I have not."

"And why don't you go ? "

With sudden unaccountable anger : "Ah, leave me alone with all your questions. Amn't I bothered enough as it is ? "

But after another few days she went out again. She now took no interest in the shops or in any of the new life around her, but walked on and on through the streets, staring vaguely ahead, returning when she felt tired or hungry. One day, when crossing a very wide bridge over the Liffey, she suddenly stopped, her face alert, and gave a quick look round at the passing crowds. Then cutting her way through them with her elbows, she rushed over

to the parapet of the bridge. She stood there for some time, a little smile on her face, which made it look slightly imbecile, gazing down at the seagulls circling over the dirty water. After a while she went on again, sighing softly she knew not why, and entered a very wide street with a line of monuments along the centre. She had walked a good distance, and when she saw some wicker chairs near small round tables outside a cake shop, she sat down gratefully in one of them. Almost immediately a girl, dressed prettily in a brown frock and yellow muslin cap and apron, came from behind and said in a high aloof voice, looking vaguely across the street : "Teas served here."

"Well now, isn't that very thoughtful of you, child," said the woman from Leamlara, getting up from the wicker chair and following the girl into the shop.

Inside, there were rows of small tables at which people sat taking tea.

"Sit here," said the girl, standing at an empty table. "Tea, I suppose ?" And without waiting for an answer, walked away, writing in her docket book.

The woman plopped into a very low wicker chair. It creaked so noisily that she gave a wide amused smile, exposing her gapped yellow teeth, to the people near ; but they took no notice. The girl came back with a tiny silver teapot and a hot-water jug which she put on the table, and went off again without a word. The woman stared after her, a puzzled expression now in her broad face. Then she stared round at the other people with the same puzzled expression ; but they were too intent on their meal to take any notice. With a little sigh she poured out a cup of tea and drank it at one draught.

"Well, that was lovely," she announced to two middle-aged ladies at a table near, and refreshed by the hot drink her voice was loud and emphatic.

The ladies smiled tolerantly.

Then holding up the tiny yellow cup for inspection, "But for God's sake, look at the size of the cups. Egg-cups." She held it up against the light ; "And the thinness of them. Egg-shells."

The people near her were now all looking at her, some amused, some embarrassed.

She put her cup back in the saucer and said to the people

looking at her : " Tisn't the likes of them you'd get in Leamlara. No ; but basins. And they're that thick, you could knock them spinning on the floor and it wouldn't put a crack in them."

" What place did you say, ma'am ? " said a man who had just finished his meal and was looking round for the waitress. " Is it Inishfree ? "

" No, sir, it is not." Her face lit up. " It is Leamlara, in the county of Cork."

The man was not listening. He was getting up from the table, and addressing the waitress who was hurrying to him with a smile :

" I will arise and go now, and go to Inishfree,

And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made ; "

At his words the bright look died out of the woman's face. She sat back in her chair, her body limp, her hands folded loosely in her lap, lost in thought. Then, after a while, she sat up again, took some iced cakes off the cake stand, and went on with her meal.

When she had finished the waitress came hurrying to her, docket book in one hand, pencil raised in the other.

" Five," said the waitress, looking at the cake stand. She wrote some figures in her docket book, detached a leaf, and put it on the table, saying in a high aloof voice : " One and four."

The woman gazed up at her, her face blank.

" One and four, please," said the girl, raising her voice slightly.

" Do you mean, child—do you mean—that I'm to give you one and four ? "

" You took *five*, didn't you ? "—the girl's voice was challenging.

The woman stared for a minute or two longer, her mouth agape. Then she withdrew her gaze, closed her mouth, took her purse out of her handbag and put a shilling and four pennies on the table. She got up with difficulty from her low chair, which creaked at every move, and went slowly out. As she walked back along the crowded streets to her lodgings, she kept saying over and over again to herself in little broken murmurs : " . . . to ask me for money . . . to ask me for money . . . for the bit and the sup . . . the bit and the sup . . . that I put into my mouth . . . "

She now stayed inside again, so silent and thoughtful that the landlady was much disturbed. Seeing her one day gazing thoughtfully at a picture over the fireplace, depicting two lovers with doves on their shoulders standing beside a lily pond, the landlady said :

" If 'tis a pond you want, there's a fine big one over in Stephen's Green Park ; 'tis only a stone's throw from here. And there's plenty of ducks in it too, only they're a bit bigger than those, if you'd like to see them."

" Yes, child ; I'd like to see the ducks."

She found her way to the St. Stephen's Green Park and sat on a seat with some other women beside the pond, watching people, mostly children, fling bits of bread out of paper bags to the ducks. She went there every day, and sat on the same seat, beside practically always the same women. The others, most of them young mothers with their children, chatted freely to one another ; but she sat silent, gazing grimly at the ducks. One day, a little wisp of an old woman with a sunken mouth, a newcomer to the seat, observed, looking up at her with smiling watery eyes :

" They have a fine life, those ducks. Plenty to eat."

Then to everybody's amazement she spoke, and spoke firmly and authoritatively, her broad country accent in strong contrast to the city women's :

" That's no life at all for ducks ! A babby pond ! And babby trees ! And a ring of good-for-nothing idlers all round them ! Ah, if it was only in Leamlara they were—"

She stopped suddenly and gave a quick furtive glance from side to side. Then she screwed up her mouth into a bunch of wrinkles and stared straight in front of her.

" What place did you say, ma'am ? " said the little toothless woman, nodding and smiling, ready for a pleasant chat.

" I said no place at all, ma'am "—the voice was hard and challenging.

" I beg your pardon, ma'am, I'm sure. I meant no offence. I thought you said some name."

" Then you thought wrong, ma'am ! I said no name. No. Nor I'd never say that name again, not even if I was to be branded with hot irons."

The voice and the words were so hostile that a sudden chill seemed to fall on the little group. One young woman called

sharply to her child who was standing a little distance away : " Maureen, Maureen. Come to Mamma, lovey."

She went no more to that seat. Indifferent now too to the ducks, she sought out a place where she could sit alone. She could find none, as the Park was always crowded, so she sat in a semi-circular ring of seats in a little groove where men were chatting and smoking. She sat at the end of the seat, her back towards them, uninterested in their conversation. Then, one day, sitting like that, she started suddenly when a male voice with a slow flat accent said to her : " Maybe you'd shove up a bit, honest woman, and make room for a tired man ? "

She looked up quickly ; a stout, well-dressed man, leaning heavily on a stick, was standing beside her.

" Sit down, sir ; sit down. There's plenty of room " ; she caught him by the hand and pulled him on to the seat, pushing back against a delicate man sitting behind her with so much vigour that he began to cough and spit.

The stout man sat down, drawing a long noisy breath of relief. Then, his stick between his knees, his two hands clasped lightly on the knob, he regarded her critically for some time with smiling eyes. Then he said slowly, " I'd say now, honest woman, and I'd don't think I'd be far wrong, that you're not from these parts ? "

She had been smiling openly back at him during the survey, but at the question her smile became a little reserved. " No then, sir, I'm not."

" And I'd say, too," continued the man, " and I don't think I'd be far wrong in that either, that you're from the same part of the world as myself." He bent towards her, his eyes almost closed with fat, full of laughter, and whispered : " Did you ever hear tell of a place called Cork ? Did you ever hear tell of Shandon steeple ? Did you ever hear tell of Shandon bells ? "

Her reserve was gone in an instant. Chuckling, she cocked her head sideways, and eyed him challengingly. " Did you ever hear tell of Leamlara ? " she said.

He shot back suddenly from her, his neck rigid, his eyes fierce, his stick raised as if to strike her. " Ou' that ! Did I ever hear tell of Leamlara ? Or of Knockraha ? Or of Ballincurrig ? Or of Meeleen ? Or of Cahirlog ? "

At each of the names, pronounced with gusto, she murmured a soft "Yes" with a little jet of laughter.

"And did I ever go off with the baigles on a Sunday morning? And did I ever drink a pint of porter at Mary Anne's—Mary Anne's at Buck's Cross?"

He lowered his stick, and bending towards her again, said in a low confidential voice: "And tell me, what brings you up to this part of the world?"

The brightness died out of her face. She sighed. "God alone knows," she said; "for I don't."

"'Twas up to see a son of mine that I came," continued the man, unheeding her answer. "He's in the Civil Service." He drew back again, frowning at her over his laughing eyes. "Would you ever think, now, that I'd have a son in the Civil Service? And that I'd have grandchildren going to school to a college?" He leaned towards her again, putting his mouth close to her ear: "And I have a son a priest, too."

"A priest?"

He nodded slowly, with a wink full of meaning.

"And might he be here in Dublin, sir, your son the priest?" she asked eagerly.

The man took out his pipe in preparation for a long comfortable conversation. "In Dublin he is; and in Dublin he's going to stop; for 'tis out in one of them colleges he is. Colleges, colleges, colleges!—there's nothing for them now but colleges! 'Tis little colleges their poor father got, and he following a dray at Murphy's Brewery." He struck a match to light his pipe. "And maybe he was as well off; maybe he was as well off. He had a fine, open, airy life."

They sat silent for some time, the man placidly smoking, the woman staring in front of her with thoughtful eyes.

"And your son the priest, sir," she said at last in a low halting voice, "did he get anyway different, do you think?"

The man turned his head quickly. "Different? What way different could he get?"

She did not answer at once. "I thought maybe," her voice was very low, "that priests get different in strange places."

"Eyah, no."

They sat silent again for some time. Then she turned to him, and putting her red-gloved fingers on his arm, she looked up earnestly into his face. "And so you think, sir, that priests don't get different from what they were? That they'd be glad, maybe, to see people, if people called on them?"

"Of course they'd be glad. Why wouldn't they be glad? Leading the quare lonesome life they do."

The strained look left her face, and a little smile lighted it up. After a few minutes' silence she said in a conversational way, "I suppose 'tis a long time since you used go with the baigles round Leamlara way?"

"It is then; a long, long time. It was before I was married. But there was no more baigles for me after putting my head in the noose. She wouldn't have one of them round the place; eating her out of house and home, as she used to say. Ah, well, well. Tis a good thing to be married, and have the company of a woman and children; but 'tis a good thing too to be walking up that hill, there by Cahirllog, on a Sunday morning, just about this time of the year, when the whole place does be alive with the smell of the whitethorn."

"In Leamlara every ditch does be covered with it; and it reaching up to the sky."

That evening she informed the landlady that she was going to see her cousin, Father Pat Ryan, the following day; that he was a curate in a big, beautiful, stone church in Ardfoyle Road; that he would soon be a parish priest; and that after that he would be a bishop.

She had no difficulty in getting to the church in Ardfoyle Road; the bus stopped right in front of it. She stood for some minutes at the gate, her head thrown back a little, gazing up in admiration at the beautiful limestone building, standing imposingly on a slight elevation, with its well-trimmed grass lawns and neat paths. Then, her head high, and walking a little jauntily on the balls of her feet, she went up one of the paths to the presbytery, which was close beside the church. She told the maid to tell Father Pat Ryan that a woman from Leamlara had called to see him.

She was kept waiting for some time. At last he came; a youngish man with a long narrow face and a wide, tight-lipped,

prominent mouth. On entering the parlour he raised his hand slightly in blessing, murmuring something inaudible. She rushed to him, grabbed his half-raised hand between her two, and squeezed it with all her might, unable to speak.

"Yes, yes," said the priest hurriedly, with the edge of his tight lips. "Well now, what is it? I'm rather busy."

"Wisha, Father Pat," she said, her voice trembling with laughter, still holding on to his hand in spite of his efforts to withdraw it. "Do you remember the time, and you a wild divil of a young fellow never off an ass's back?"

The priest frowned. "Don't call me Father Pat, my child," he said, raising his disengaged hand. "Call me Father Ryan. You should respect the Church."

The laughter slowly died out of her face. She released the pressure on his hand, and then let it drop.

"It wasn't through want of respect, Father Pat," she said humbly; "it was out of love."

"Yes, yes, yes," said the priest hurriedly, pointing to the chair she had risen from on his entrance. She sat down mechanically, staring at him. He sat down, too, a little distance away from her.

"Now tell me what you want," he said, his eyes looking beyond her to the wall behind. "And be as brief as possible; I'm rather busy this morning."

She was silent for a minute or two. Then her face lighted up again, and she said: "Anyhow, sure 'tis always Father Pat we call you in Leamlara."

"I have no doubt," said the priest, in a strictly judicial tone, his lips scarcely moving; "no doubt at all. The people there are ignorant country people who don't know any better." He raised his hand slightly, "Now tell me your trouble, my child."

A slight flush slowly spread over her broad face. Then in a voice which had suddenly become hollow, she said: "Maybe you're right, Father Pat, and the people of Leamlara are only ignorant country people, all astray to city ways. But there's this much to be said for them, that during all the long years I lived there, never in all that time, did I know anyone to say or do anything to hurt a person's feelings."

For the first time since he came into the room the priest looked straight at her. He wore a slightly puzzled frown.

She rose slowly, sighing. "And now, I think, 'tis time for me to be going."

The priest rose too. "If there is anything I can do for you—"

"No, Father Pat, thank you kindly, there is nothing you can do for me"; she shook her head slowly as she went to the door.

That evening, in a gentle humble way, she thanked the landlady for all her kindness, apologising over and over again for any offence she may have given through her ignorance of city ways. And all that night she lay awake, staring at the dark, speaking to herself in a low monotone: ". . . and there was Bridgie Nolan, that was in one class with me at school, and went soon after that off to New York . . . all that time . . . all that time . . . And there was my own poor brother, Paddy, now over fifty years in Boston . . . day in, day out, for fifty years . . ."

As soon as a faint grey light had made the furniture in the room visible, she got up. She washed and dressed quietly and methodically. She took her nightdress off the bed, folded it neatly, and put it into her suitcase. She took some more neatly folded underclothing out of a chest of drawers, and put that too into her suitcase. She took out of her purse the money for her week's rent and milk bill, and put it on the table. Then, her suitcase in her hand, she went quietly down the stairs and out into the street. Some milk carts jingled lightly along. She stood at the bus stop for some time, her suitcase on the ground beside her. Then a bus came along and she got into it. She was the only passenger.

To the bus conductor, who was yawning as he stood beside her, his roll of tickets in his hand, she said humbly, "I want to go to the station, sir, where I'll get a train that'll take me back to my own place."

"What place is that?" said the conductor, looking at her with watery eyes as he finished his yawn.

"'Tis Leamlara, sir, in the county of Cork."

"Kingsbridge Station"; and he was off on another yawn. He punched a ticket and gave it to her, saying, "Take another bus at O'Connell Bridge."

"Will you tell me, sir, if you please, when we get there?" He nodded.

She got a bus at O'Connell Bridge which took her along the quays to the station. A porter rolling a truck of milk churns told her that the train for Cork would not leave till half past nine. It was then only six o'clock. She looked at him vaguely, wondering what she would do, so he said to her, "Leave your case here, and go off, get some breakfast for yourself, and be back here again about nine."

"Yes, sir, I could do that."

He took the case from her and she went off. She crossed the bridge, and unconscious of where she was going or of her need for breakfast, went up a hilly road facing her. The morning air was fresh. Occasionally a car or pedestrian passed her. At the top of the hill the road branched into another, a wide open road lined with new villas, a main road to the city. Away in the distance, to the left, the road bent at right angles and one caught a glimpse of green fields. She turned instinctively to the left. The traffic, all going citywards, was slowly increasing. Every now and then, a cart, car, and sometimes a heavy bus passed her; but she took no notice. She kept her eyes fixed on the green in the distance, which got larger as she went on. As she approached the bend, she was able to see cattle grazing. Suddenly she stopped, her face alight, every feature—as it were—*wide open*; she had just caught a faint whiff of hawthorn blossom. Then she gave a little whinnying cry, and began to run in her stiff aged way. To increase her speed she left the path and went into the road: Closing her eyes she drew long noisy breaths through her nostrils, and ran awkwardly on, laughing and murmuring to herself: ". . . Leamlara . . . My Leamlara . . ."

Just then a heavy red bus, laden with passengers, came careering round the bend, and before the driver had time to pull up, had crashed into her; the two wheels bumped over her body.

When they took her body out from under the bus, the only part of her face that was left unbroken was her mouth; and that was slightly parted and smiling. And the young driver, his face flushed, his peaked cap back on his fair, curly hair, kept on saying in an aggrieved way:

"The bloody woman must have been walking in her sleep. Walking in her sleep."

THE BRIDGE

By L. P.

Friendship is not made in a day.
How shall we know the secret self
or learn the varying moods
of one who is a friend ?

The opaque body stands guard before the subtle ghost
to hide it from us, and when
in patience and kindness with humour and anger and some
boredom
we build a love
our friend remains invisible.

To throw a bridge from the seen to the unseen
is, they say, to trust to imagination.
But why not trust to imagination ?
Have we ever done aught else ?
Curiosity and imagination, scientific virtues
occupy themselves with the unknown.
Each forward step is always into mystery.
We grope our way and hope for light.

Let us conquer our fear of the intellectuals
and talk of God.

Does God exist in his own splendour
or was he created by the magnificent imagination of man ?
And Angels and Archangels
Principalities and Powers and Rulers
were they too invented by men ?
Or did some simple soul see by a glimmer in the dark
a truth too great to be expressed
in his vocabulary of three hundred words
and so flung a bridge out from his ignorance
over an abyss of ignorance more vast
to land . . . where ?
In the glory of God the father in man, in God the son in man,
and in God the spirit in man,
or in the void ?

We cannot know.
Nevertheless we must ask.

There is the bridge. It hangs out over the void,
but greater men than we believed it real.
Prophets and poets,
Buddha and Plato and Jesus
and gay Clement of Alexandria
to whom his Church forbade philosophy
and who asked smiling,
"How can I know I must not philosophize
if I do not philosophize?"

These men said :
God is not blatant.
He does not speak in the whirlwind
nor in the earthquake.
His voice is silent. Small and still
it whispers in your ear.

They told us :
If you would learn a harmony
you must sit silent listening
or toil on note by note and chord by chord
until you own it.
So with God.

For out of limitation knowledge is born
as out of self discipline beauty.

To believe in God (this is their tale)
you must believe in your own will and in its power.
Take your spirit in your hands and beat it to the shape
of the original pattern you will discover within you,
and, enlarged from your prison of egotism,
you may see God everywhere.

THE BRIDGE

53

In darkness and dawn and the sound of music,
in the tides of the seas pushing their waves up the shores
and slowly withdrawing,
in sweet smelling flowers and the swing of the planets,
in moss under trees and the oo-oos of owls
in passion
and cold death.

If God, unseen, yet lives
he is no harder to know than a friend.

But no man who has found him
can show the path he went on to another.
For his secret is to himself
and friendship is between two.

And if he find him he cannot keep him
for the search is eternal as is the finding.

O intellectuals and tallying scientists
give us room.

Here is a thing you cannot measure.

If you blot out perspective before us
we shall not have courage to walk on into black darkness.
Why scatter words to say we search for God in vain
when you know no more than we ?

Out on this quest,
(where to find is to lose and with loss the adventure begins over
again),
eyeless and witless,
indomitable,
we crawled
up from primeval slime,
led by our dreams.

Now, tottering, we scarcely stand erect.
O leave us imagination.

For, if you blind by new red tape
that flickering light, by which we climbed,
we may slip back into the straight bonds of bigots
who cannot see the face of God
the while they toil to recast man,
(God's Image !)
into a worn out mould
of the frightened half-wit, grovelling.
How shall such fools give sight of Glory ?

That way lies death.

But, if it is death to deny reason,
they die too, who are forbidden hope.

As for me. Here is my testament.
I cannot go the way of the Churches.
And I will not follow the path of the intellectuals.
So I must just pad on after the poets and prophets
and trust to their imaginations.
When I reach the bridge over the abyss,
seen by Jesus and Socrates and Buddha,
and forced to its crossing
I face its risks,
if it fades on the void, I fall
following them, fallen before me.
But, if I trust sanely,
that far thrown span of a presumptuous link
rests solidly supported.
Thus, from its piers
it is but two steps off into a sequent life,
(as strange perhaps as this),
where, whether I find God or find him not,
I can still, with Clement of Alexandria,
give Him thanks for my sojourn here
and blessings for my departure.

THE MEXICAN PAINTERS

By Theodore Goodman

“L’ECOLE DE PARIS” is, of course, the greatest and best-known of the groups of modern painters who have done so much fine work in the last 40 years. The principal figures, such masters as Picasso, Braque, Roualt, Matisse, Utrillo and many others, are so well known that their fame threatens to obscure much fine work that is still done in other parts of the

world. The Mexican group headed by Diego Rivera is almost unknown in Europe to-day. I know of no European gallery that possesses a single example of any of these masters' work. The complete ignorance of collectors and students of modern painting concerning this school can only be explained by the fact that Parisian influence in recent years has reached such enormous proportions that any painting that does not bear the Parisian hall-mark has been unaccountably neglected.

The great Mexican painters have returned to the people and to the soil of their own country for their inspiration. Sincerity and honesty are implicit in their work. There are no signs whatsoever of the fashionable influence which has unfortunately reduced so much modern painting to a weak copy of the originals.

Of the whole school only Rivera has visited Europe. He is a profound admirer of the great Paris artists, but he has never fallen under their influence. If his work shows the influence of any painters at all it is those of the great Italian masters of the Renaissance. Rivera is a great original painter; his colour and emotional power are those of a master and a master who almost alone in the world to-day can paint on the grand scale. He is the one living painter, and I don't except Picasso, who is able to paint murals of enormous sizes with the same freedom and ease as such old masters as Tintoretto or Veronese. One of his finest and most beautiful pictures is "The freeing of the Peon" which symbolizes the release of the Mexican peasant from oppression, a naked Peon with the marks of the whip-lash on his body is freed from his chains by soldiers of the new Mexico. The style may be described as dramatic realism but what makes it a work of great importance is the astonishing feeling and emotion of the treatment. It is reminiscent of Greco.

Technical problems do not exist at all for Rivera. As a draftsman one looks in vain for his equal among living artists. Only such a master as Mantegna could have equalled the sculpturesque quality of the drawing in the "Peon" fresco or the equally magnificent "Zaputa." Although Rivera can paint with the most astonishing academic realism he is by no means bound by the conventions of the academies. He will demand the same freedom as Picasso when it is necessary to his work. "Zaputa" is an example. A Peon leads in a white horse followed by a group of soldiers. Beneath his feet are the prostrate bodies

of the oppressors of Mexico, now overcome by the forces of freedom. Here, to achieve his effect, Rivera has deliberately distorted. His whole treatment is superbly theatrical and the colour is as rich and decorative as in the great fresco painting by "Ucello," the battle piece which used to hang in the National Gallery in London. I have noted that Rivera is reminiscent of Greco in the spiritual power of his work. Greco was inspired by great religious faith, Rivera by equally burning political convictions but both were first artists. Rivera creates pictures which in sheer beauty of colour are as lovely as those of any of the impressionists although his work shows no sign of their influence. The only modern painter whose work could, perhaps, have influenced Rivera is Paul Gauguin in his Tahitian period. I don't know if Rivera has studied the works of the earlier master, but his fresco "Sugar-cane and Cocoanuts," which shows a group of women and children carrying golden sugar-cane under a blazing Mexican sky, has very much of the feelings of the Gauguin Tahitian picture. To describe the blazing colour of this picture is impossible; one has to see the original.

Rivera is known in his own country and in the United States for his monumental murals and fresco decorations in public buildings. Anyone who has studied the photographs of his designs in the Rockefeller city building will regret that these superb creations should have been destroyed because they clashed with the political conceptions of the directors. In Mexico city, however, he has been more fortunate and there his designs can be studied. Apart from these giant conceptions Rivera is a very fine easel painter. Such a picture as "Woman and Child in Doorway," now in Mr. Weyhe's New York collection, is at first sight difficult to understand. Only gradually can one appreciate the power and the originality of his treatment. As a portrait painter he has few equals and if his work were known in Europe it is certain that he would have had a wide and beneficial influence on young painters.

Just before the present war Lord Huntingdon, who is one of the few European painters who have worked with and been influenced by Rivera, and I were endeavouring to arrange an exhibition of Mexican works in London. Rivera himself had promised to send some of his most important paintings to the exhibition. Unfortunately the war made the project impossible,

but it is to be hoped that eventually it will be possible for students of art who are not able to travel in Mexico and the United States to see some of these fine works.

Rivera is known at least by name to most people interested in modern painting, but the other masters outside of their own country are not even mentioned by professional critics and yet some of them if they had belonged to the Parisian school, would bear world-famous names. Orozco is a master second only to Rivera. With him technical problems do not exist. He has the assurance and dramatic power which characterize all the Mexican school and he is perhaps the most subtle of them all. A very fine decorative painter is Siqueiros who, in such a picture as "The Waiting Child," has created a study worthy of Goya. Another of his paintings, "At the Prison Gate" is notable for its restrained use of deep colour. Julio Castillanes has done fine landscape and portrait work and so has Manuel Rodriguez Lazano. His large decorative study "The Lovers" is reminiscent of the delightful works of the Florentine painters, but he is as fresh and original as any of the others. Perhaps his best-known painting, at least in Mexico, is "The Ballad Singers" which shows a group of Mexican peasants singing to the accompaniment of a musician with a lute. The treatment is of child-like simplicity. One thinks of such French masters as Henri Rousseau or Vivin but technically it is far superior to any of their work.

These are the principal painters of this important school, and whatever happens to painting in Europe in these troubled times, it is consoling to reflect that a group of masters at the present moment are able to carry on with their highly important work, and we must hope that the time will come when we shall be able to study this fine school of painting.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE MONASTIC ORDER IN ENGLAND. A history of its development from the times of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council, 943-1216. By Dom David Knowles. Cambridge University Press. 45s. net.

Burke's description of society moving through the varied tenor of perpetual renovation, progression, decay, fall, and again renovation, progression is exem-

plified by the history of these societies within society, the monastic orders—though Dom David Knowles is careful to point out that the Rule of St. Benedict, from which western monasticism derives, did not provide for an “order” but “a way of life,” a basis capable of and indeed receiving continual modification. The Rule was to supply a way of serving God apart from the world. The elect flees from the world, and the world shows itself not blind to great ideals but so pathetically desirous of them that it follows, and soon forms a bustling multitude where was a solitude—so it was with the hermits of the desert: so it was with the early Benedictines; the monastery changed from a simple patriarchal household to a vast, wealthy, complicated organisation with a ruling hierarchy and inherited offices among dependants: so it was with the Cistercians, who sought the waste and lonely places and turned them into intensively cultivated gardens, who founded the great woollen industry on which England rose to power and riches. The very success of the venture is itself the cause of decay. The Carthusians, almost alone, have escaped the danger by refusing to become a success—in the sense that Benedictine and Cistercian monasticism was a success in the Middle Ages.

Dom Knowles’ book treats of that success in England between 943 and 1216. It is a work embodying great learning, and is admirably arranged. The first part tells the external history of the monks. Starting from an account of St. Benedict’s Rule and a glance at early Anglo-Saxon and Celtic monasticism in England, it takes up the main story with the installing of Dunstan as Abbot of Glastonbury, and comes on to relate the eddying fortunes of the monasteries, the relaxing of discipline, the reinfusion of spiritual life from abroad, the influence of exceptional abbot or interfering king until the Fourth Lateran Council introduced decrees that changed the whole matter. The second part of the book deals with the internal affairs of the monasteries, and is not likely to be as interesting to the common reader.

As is natural in a work of such length, certain parts have greater merit than others. The chapter which tells of the revival under the three saintly friends, Dunstan, Oswald, and Ethelwold has a swing and impetus about it that fails the author when he speaks of less happy times. The coming of the Cistercians to the wild places of England and their founding of the abbeys with lovely and famous names, Tintern and Melrose and St. Mary of Fountains is also persuasively written. So, too, is the chapter on the Carthusians and the gentle St. Hugh of Avalon. But sometimes the very learning which alone makes possible a work of this kind impedes lucid expression and cumbers the style. So many qualifying remarks, so many asides, so often “it would seem” and “with regard to,” so many abstract nouns piled up—“the strength of the tradition of uniformity in architecture”—such long and circumlocutious sentences as “Its physical feasibility was further conditioned by the frequent absences from home of the abbot who, whether from genuine necessity or to avoid discordant and unpleasant incidents might remain for a great part of the year upon one or other of his manors.”: all this results in loose and prolix instead of firm and clear-cut writing. Also, words like “obedientiaries,” “cardinalatial,” phrases like “eloquent pluralist,” “palmary example,” though they slip in easily enough in a work of this nature, are to be deplored. The use of a wrong preposition, as “upon” instead of “into” after “introduce,” and “off” instead of “from” after

"bought" may be due to a misprint. But these are moles which, troubling to the artist, will hinder no scholar from digging in the mine which Dom Knowles has opened.

LORNA REYNOLDS.

THE LAND OF SAINT JOAN. By Owen Rutter, with engravings by Averil Mackenzie-Grieve. Pp. xii + 265. London: Methuen & Co., Ltd. 1941. 15s. net.

The authors tell the story of

Jehanne la bonne Lorraine
Qu' Englois brulerent a Rouan . . .

and of his journeys in her tracks. I regret the allusions to the present situation in Europe. It is true, though Mr. Rutter does not mention it, that "France inoccupée" of to-day corresponds pretty fairly to the domains of the "King of Bourges," and "France occupée" to those parts of France held by the English, or rather by the Angevin Empire!

At the accession of Charles VII "le roi de Bourges," Henry VI of England held Normandy and Guyenne, Picardy, Champagne, the Ile de France, was in alliance with the Duke of Brittany, with the Duke of Burgundy (who held Burgundy, Flanders and Artois as well as his Imperial fiefs). Charles VII held Berry, Orléannais, Touraine, Poitou, Anjou, Dauphiné, Lyonnais, Provence, Auvergne, Languedoc, La Rochelle and part of Saintonge.

Charles's advisers were not men of great calibre—Louvet, de Tanguy, du Châtel, Frotier, and later the turncoat Arthur de Richemont, an energetic soldier, made Constable 1425 but soon supplanted by La Trémoille "égoiste et funeste"—"aventurier sans scrupule et avide." Jeanne d' Arc was a Barroise. She was born in Bar mouvant, *i.e.*, in that part of the territory of the Duke of Bar and Lorraine which he held from the French Crown. She was therefore French.

Her story is in itself a miracle. She was born in 1412. She arrived at Chinon in 1429. She issued her manifesto to Bedford, Henry VI's Regent of France, and relieved Orleans which she entered on April 27, 1429. She won the battles of the Pont de Meung (15 June), Beaugency, where "Falstaff" was defeated, and the decisive battle of Patay (19 June) where the casualties on the English side were enormous (2,000) while the French lost only three. On the 17th July, Charles was crowned at Reims.

She took town after town, but was repulsed and wounded at Paris (September 8), largely owing to the apathy of Charles, who had fallen under the influence of the jealous and dastardly La Trémoille. She was betrayed at Compiegne and captured by the Burgundian commander, suffered vexations at the hands of the Bishop of Beauvais, Pierre de Cauchon, a creature of Charles VII's infamous mother (who betrayed France) and a satellite of the Duke of Burgundy. Jeanne was sold to the English for 10,000 crowns of gold, and taken to Rouen, where she was tried by Cauchon, condemned and burnt (May 30, 1431).

France keeps as a precious memory the

souvenir qu'a laissé sur ces bords

Une enfant qui menait son cheval vers le fleuve.

Son âme était récente et sa cotte était neuve.

Innocente elle allait vers le plus grand des sorts.

Car celle qui venait du pays tourangeau,
 C'était la même enfant qui quelques jours plus tard,
 Gouvernant d'un seul mot le rustre et le soudard,
 Descendait devers Meury ou montait vers Jargeau.

in Péguy's words. I am sorry that Mr. Rutter does not mention Péguy's *Mystère de la Charité de Jeanne d'Arc*.

Henry VI was crowned in Paris (1431) and the French cause declined. La Trémoille was happily assassinated in 1433. In 1436 Richemont took Paris. Soon the whole Ile de France was taken. Bedford died in 1435, and the English cause was lost by his death. Rouen surrendered in 1449, Bordeaux and Bayonne in 1451. By 1453 England held only Paris.

But France still had to reckon with the great feudatories, the Duke of Burgundy, the Duke of Bourbon who held the Bourbonnais, Auvergne, La Marche, Forez, the Beaujolais and the Dombes, René of Anjou, Count of Provence, King of Sicily, Cyprus and Jerusalem, the Duke of Lorraine and Bar.

I have found few errors in Mr. Rutter's book. He does not seem to realize the distinction between Lorraine and Bar, or between Bar *mouvant* and Bar *non-mouvant*. He does not bring out the faults of La Trémoille. However he points out with contumely Shakespeare's travesty of history in *Henry VI*.

T. B. RUDMOSE-BROWN.

THE POEMS OF FRANCOIS VILLON. Edited and turned into English Prose by Edward F. Chaney. Pp. xiv + 205. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell. 1940. 5s. net.

This is an excellent edition with an excellent translation. It only wants explanatory notes to be exactly what is needed for the Irish or English reader.

I might make a few suggestions:—

Petit Testament l. 3 *considérant, de sens rassis*, is "cool-headed" an adequate rendering?

Testament l. 331 *Archipiades* unrendered.

l. 382 *le conte Dauphin d'Auvergne* is not the "Count of Auvergne," but the "Dauphin of Auvergne," a different personage.

l. 385 *ly sains apostolles* is not the "Holy Apostle," but the "Pope."

l. 521 *les tetes* not rendered.

l. 547 *Plus ne servirez qu'ung viel prestre* the grammatical construction of the next line disproves the rendering given.

l. 816 *Ladre* really means "leper."

l. 842 *grant mere* does V. really mean "grandmother."

l. 897 *boullus* not "burning"!

l. 923 *le Bon Fouterre* why not translated?

l. 954 *Haro, haro, le grant et le mincur*. Does "Help! Help! Great and small!" mean anything?

ll. 1118-1125 untranslated.

l. 1375 *Regnier, roy de Cecille* is René d' Anjou, King of Sicily, etc.

l. 1426 Why be so squeamish?

1. 1591-1627 Why is the *Ballade de la Grosse Margot* not translated ?
It has the famous refrain :—

“ En ce bordeau ou tenons nostre estat ! ”

1. 1686 *Charreté e* is not “ cask ” but “ the carter’s winnings.”

1. 1805 *le laiz* not “ lay ” but “ legacy.”

1. 1987 why boggle at “ trois crottes ”?

Ballade : Je meurs de seuf.

1. 1988 why so squeamish and so inaccurate ?

1. 34 *Les gaiges ravoir* is not “ get my pay again,” but “ redeem my pledges.”

Problème 1. 28 *Alphasar* is “ Arphaxad.”

But Villon is really, in great part, quite unintelligible without a commentary. I consider Neri’s to be the best and most concise.

To Siciliano’s book may be added his article in *Romania* (Jan. 1939). He shows clearly that Villon’s *Testament* was not written “ d’un seul jet ” but composed at various times and in various places, the serious portions later than the burlesque.

T. B. RUDMOSE-BROWN.

DRAMA. By Desmond McCarthy. London : Putnam. 9s. 6d. net.

There are two sets of conditions under which dramatic criticism may be written. The newspaper way is when the first production of a play is seen by the critic and his thoughts and feelings about it have to be ready in an hour or little more for printing in the morrow’s issue of his paper ; the other way is when the critic can proceed in a leisurely way to deliver his judgment, having seen the play, not necessarily on the first night but on some specially chosen night in the course of its run, when it has been cut, amended, elaborated or improved by replacements in its cast—all as the result, perhaps, of the rapid first-night criticism.

The second way can be more enjoyable to the reader, provided the writer is a stylist like Mr. McCarthy who delights in happy opportunities for allusion and reference, but it is not necessarily the better kind of dramatic criticism. Those who know the theatre best—playwrights, players and producers—would have no doubts upon the matter at all. If the play had succeeded why bother with belated views about it assisted by much delving into theatrical history ? They would want to remember instead just a line or two from some of the first-night notices and feel that that was better than all this, more valuable for the theatre in the long run because nearer to the audience, that essential part of the collaboration which is a play.

Mr. McCarthy is pre-eminently the second kind of critic, the one who can be wise with distinction long after the event. He has, of course, one great advantage over the first-night critic in that he can be selective and go only to those plays which have already caught public interest and which he is nearly always sure he will be able to write about at length—before he sees them. He may say he is in search of what is significant in modern drama and try to look at what he wants to see from a highly individual standpoint, but the fact remains that, although he has much knowledge of the drama in the literary sense, and

writes of that side of the theatre with his usual polish and charm, he is not a sound dramatic critic.

He writes about the theatre for his own pleasure first and merely in the hope that those who listen to his musings, as it were while reading him will be similarly entertained, but he leaves out completely the reactions of the audience to the play he may be seeing at the moment. To be able to feel this may not be a subtle gift, but even the reporter-critic must have it if he is to discharge his duty to those readers of his paper who may or may not be the next audience for the play after the dangerous moment of its first production. This is how Mr. McCarthy manages to ignore the audience :

"One of the tests I apply to plays, before recommending or cursing them, is the degree to which I have lost self-consciousness myself, in the theatre. If I have been so rivetted that I ceased to know that I was a human being sitting between others, then, whatever on reflection I may think of its *value*, that performance goes straight into my category of good entertainments. The play and actors have passed the great, elementary, fundamental test."

This is scarcely good enough even from a distinguished essayist ; one must take account of the feelings of others even in the theatre. Carried to its most absurd conclusion one could conceive of a play being done before an audience of a single person and that no matter how deeply he might be so "rivetted" it might be a very bad play. However, he is not without realisation of what an audience may have to endure occasionally :

"I read 'Within the Gates' with admiration ; I saw it with disappointment. I will endeavour to discover how far this was due to production and how far to faults which had escaped me before. On the stage 'Within the Gates' fails. I thought it grand, moving, and a step in a dramatic development which at last might enable *poets* to write for the theatre—when I read it. When I watched it, it seemed a grandiose mixture of blatant sentiment with heart-damping unreality."

He goes on to discover, but is forced in the end to say :

"In a way I am sorry that this play has been performed. For another reason I am glad. Mr. O'Casey is a man who cares so little for the effect on the public of his work that he is in danger of ignoring problems of communication."

Ah, yes, "problems of communication," the necessity for realising the existence of the audience, at least on the first night. The necessity for ignoring it, in the grandiose manner of Mr. McCarthy, may be one reason why Mr. O'Casey does not now write good plays.

B. M.

RONSARD. PRINCE OF POETS. By Morris Bishop. Oxford University Press.
16s. 6d. net.

A painstaking narrative of Ronsard's life and loves, in which great attention is paid to catalogue detail of every description, in Ronsard's home life, at the

Collège de Coqueret and at the French Court. The author has acquired the knack of extracting material from all the available reference books, and large tracts of this volume are prose translations of Ronsard's poems. This pedestrian accumulation of historical detail is entirely unilluminated by any creative vision of the poet's personality or by constructive criticism of his work, such as one gets in F. L. Lucas' inspired and stimulating essay in "Studies French and English." But then Mr. Lucas is a poet himself and the more one reads of these "researches" on great poets by unimaginative persons of so-called Academic distinction the more one agrees with Shelley :—"The jury which sits in judgment upon a poet, belonging as he does to all time, must be composed of his peers : it must be impanelled by Time from the selectest of the wise of many generations." Mr. Bishop is far from being "the selectest of the wise." His prose style reflects a commonplace and facetious mind, and anyone who had not read the poetry of Ronsard would get the impression from this book, that the poet spent his time when not writing, in either pursuing unsuccessfully a selection of extremely dull and unpleasant girls, or endeavouring to curry favour in a sycophantic manner at the French Court.

There are a great many verse translations of no distinction. Even Andrew Lang and George Wyndham were better than this ; Charles Graves and F. L. Lucas are very good indeed, although none of Ronsard's translators have achieved the exquisite Elizabethan felicity of Humbert Wolfe's "*Sonnets pour Hélène*." Entirely worthless as creative criticism, the volume might have been of some value as a reference book had there been an index, but even that comfort is denied to us.

MONA GOODEN.

WORDS FOR MUSIC. By V. C. Clinton-Baddeley. Cambridge University Press. 7s. 6d. net.

The history of this excellent book goes back to the summer of 1935 when W. B. Yeats, greatly excited by the ballads F. R. Higgins used to sing to him, collected poems, pictures and tunes for a set of Broadsides. These were published monthly by the Cuala Press in 1936 and were followed by a second set, of which Dorothy Wellesley was one of the editors. The B.B.C. invited Yeats to produce a series of poetry readings and in these broadcasts he was assisted by Mr. Clinton-Baddeley who now in these pages records the poet's views on the reading and singing of poetry, and the many talks on "words for music" which took place at the home of Dorothy Wellesley.

Yeats hated the concert platform. "We fix a quarrel upon the concert platform," he writes in his preface to *Broadsides* (1937) and again, "the concert platform has wronged the poets by masticating their well-made words and turning them into spittle." The dispute between music and poetry is two and a half centuries old. Dryden's attitude was "'tis my part to invent and the musician's to humour that invention," and Mr. Clinton-Baddeley has not to seek far for cases of the poets being not humoured but wronged. The sense of the poetry is often stultified and its rhythms destroyed by the music and attempts have been made to set to music words which never should have been set at all.

The nineteenth century was a bad period in English music, but at least it gave us Hubert Parry with his respect for words. To-day the position is stronger

and we have seen two composers, Peter Warlock and Vaughan-Williams, who "have interpreted poetry with a sympathy not found in English music since the seventeenth century."

ARTHUR DUFF.

COMMENTS AND CHARACTERS BY JOHN BUCHAN (LORD TWEEDSMUIR). Edited with an Introduction by W. Forbes Gray, F.R.S.E., F.S.A.Scot. Nelson. 9s. 6d.

The late John Buchan was successful as a writer of popular romantic novels, as a critical biographer of Cromwell, Julius and Augustus Caesar, and as a minor politician who received major rewards. In his early writing days he contributed articles and a London letter to the *Scottish Review*, a weekly penny paper of which he was editor and Nelsons the proprietors. Apparently he was not very proud in later days of his earlier journalism, because he made no mention of the work in his reminiscences, *Memory Holds the Door*, unless, of course, we are to believe the incredible assumption that memory did not. Readers of *Comments and Characters* will appreciate his reticence.

The extracts from the *Scottish Review* are divided into nine sections. The major portion of them is about domestic politics (England's, not Scotland's), the British Empire, foreign affairs, socialism and industry. This is cold, dessicate mutton. Whatever interest the moment may have given to Buchan's political comments, time and change have destroyed utterly. Time's fell hand has done worse. It has revealed the deracinate nationalism of the man, his cold cosmopolitanism, his imperialist complacency.

The fifth section, entitled "Literature and Journalism," contains some occasional essays that are pleasant enough about Scott, Burns, Stevenson, who were, with Barrie, the world's greatest writers after Shakespeare. Buchan's judgment, as exemplified by his pantheon, was obviously narrow and uninformed by reading in European literature. Furthermore, his judgments were neither profound nor acute. He merely repeated, in his own way of course, that Shakespeare was the owner of a master-mind, that Francis Thompson was a miracle-worker with words, that Max Beerbohm was an incomparable caricaturist. Buchan by the way, liked Beerbohm's *Britannia* better than anything else. It is to be doubted if he felt the full delicacy of the razor-edge.

While all this may be said, it must be admitted that Buchan wrote uncommonly well. He practised the straightforward, austere prose that was first cousin to the Latin classicists; and sometimes, his cold matter-of-fact comments are stirred by a breath of warm rhetoric, such as stirred Caesar when he was forced to admiration by the valour of the Nervii.

SCATTERING BRANCHES. Tributes to the Memory of W. B. Yeats. Edited by Stephen Gwynn. Published by Macmillan & Co. Price 8s. 6d.

Within its limitations this book succeeds in presenting at least an outlined impression of W. B. Yeats, and so long as one does not expect it to reveal more

than its title should indicate, that is, so long as one does not look in it for a full study, it makes satisfactory reading.

Scattering Branches is a collection of written impressions by a few of the many who were associated with Yeats in the various movements in which he so largely played a guiding part, the literary revival, the National theatre, and in a less public way, but with all the force and passion of his art, the cause of Ireland. A small proportion of the tributes are by fellow-artists, not participants in these movements, but warm admirers of him both as an artist and a personality. In turn, Stephen Gwynn, Maude Gonne, Sir William Rothenstein, Lennox Robinson, W. G. Fay, Edmund Dulac, F. R. Higgins, C. Day Lewis, and L. A. G. Strong pay tribute to him as a lover of Ireland, as an artist, as a directing force in the cultural revival of this country, as a man of great practicality and business acumen, and as a friend. Yeats was not easily approached, but once admitted to his friendship one met with kindness and a consideration that was more valuable than uncritical acceptance.

In a book of this kind the ideal, one supposes, would be a sort of composite picture of the man as poet, patriot, public figure, as man of thought and action, a revelation of one personality moving against the background of his times. True enough, there does emerge from these writings something of the greatness of Yeats, but that is inevitable. An artist of such stature must by his nature dominate any setting in which he appears. But here one is conscious of shaky lighting and a tendency to lay too much stress on isolated facets of character.

Taken individually, the essays have point, and C. Day Lewis's particularly, "Yeats and the Aristocratic Tradition," is an intelligent piece of analytical writing. It shows clearly how much the environment of the poet's youth and the influence of his father directed him on the way he went. Yeats could only have been the great individual poet he was by virtue of this tradition, and at every stage in his subsequent development one encounters the marks of his origins. It was a failing as well as a virtue, but it did act as a shield. Within this tradition he could preserve his integrity. For he was always the self-conscious artist, setting experience against his own laws. It was from his aristocratic tradition he drew his sense of responsibility towards art, a sense which strengthened and toughened even when the social organisation of that tradition had broken down.

In a lengthy essay Lennox Robinson writes on Yeats as a dramatist, and although he makes a resolute attempt, one is not convinced that Yeats was happy or eminently successful in this medium. In the concluding essay, L. A. G. Strong deals with this point. He argues that Yeats compromised at the expense of character. His characters do not live by themselves as do, say, Shakespeare's. Nor did the quality of his thoughts, the thoughts of a poet to whom the symbol was all-important, clarify his difficulties. His strength as a poet was his weakness as a dramatist.

Scattering Branches is well salted with good sense and shrewd analysis. There is little or no hagiography. What we are now waiting for is a complete study of Yeats, a full-length portrait, and a fresh revaluation of his work. Only within the scope of such a work can a more exact estimate of Yeats be reached.

G. M. BRADY.

FAMOUS ENGLISH SERMONS, 730-1939. Edited by Ashley Sampson. Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd. 5s. net.

The editor of this collection laments that the sermon has never been given its rightful place in English literature. He would echo Hannah More's remark in the eighteenth century that there were so few people in London to whom one could recommend a sermon. It is true that there are but few of us who like having our defects pointed out, who like being told what we should be, and should do. We turn from cold douches of exhortation to rustle in the violets of poetry, that poetry which makes this too loved earth more lovely still. Nevertheless, the literature of the pulpit has been coming into its own. Professor Owst's volumes on medieval preaching, and Professor R. W. Chambers' work on the continuity of English prose have brought the sermon and devotional literature due notice in the last fifteen years. The present book is valuable in that it brings together examples of the sermon from the earliest times to our own day. Here is the engaging simplicity of Bede, and of the medieval Richard (or Thomas) Wimbledon; the sober, well-ordered arguments of Colet; the subtle and sombre thought of Donne; the shining clarity of Jeremy Taylor; the poetic insight of Newman; the ironic vigour of Swift; the sensible athletic prose of a modern like C. S. Lewis. But the collection, I take it, is meant for the general reader rather than the scholar; is to be valued for its "message" rather than as pure literature. For the version of Wimbledon's famous sermon at Paul's Cross in 1388 has been taken from the translation of the original Middle English preserved in Fox's *Acts and Monuments*, and only the first part reproduced; the spelling has been modernised. Richard Baxter's sermon on *The Life of Faith* has been abridged and nearly all the Biblical quotations removed. We are not told who is responsible for the English of the Venerable Bede's *Sermon from the Latin*, unless the information that it is taken from C. F. Browne's book is meant to imply that he is the translator.

There is a short but excellent introduction.

LORNA REYNOLDS.

RUTHERFORD. By A. S. Eve, C.B.E., D.Sc., F.R.S. With a foreword by Earl Baldwin of Bewdley, K.G. Cambridge University Press. 21s. net.

A very plausible old charlatan was Cagliostro. Among his wonderful accomplishments was the ability, he alleged, to change the baser metals into pure gold. And he deceived the very elect. Inspired by curiosity, or cupidity, or both perhaps, a frequent visitor to the laboratory of the mountebank was no less a personage than the notorious Cardinal Rohan who did not consider it beneath his dignity to lend a hand at the bellows. His Eminence was not aware that before his arrival the arch-impostor had inserted some gold dust into a cavity in a lump of coal, and thus the dream of the ages materialised before their eyes. At the close of many vicissitudes Cagliostro died in his bed and was granted "six feet in the moles of Adrianus."

But these fraudulent tricks, described indeed in the Papyrus of Leyden, have become to-day real transmutations. Base metals can be turned to gold. By bombarding certain elements with swift alpha particles Rutherford detected the emission of atoms of hydrogen which presumably come from the protons of

the bombarded nucleus. Here we have an artificial transmutation of one element into another.

Lord Rutherford's name is inseparably associated with the well-known theory of the atom as resembling a "miniature solar system." The positive charge would thus be found at the centre of the atom and the negative electrons circulating round it on their planetary course. The differences between various kinds of atoms could be explained by their different structure. For example an atom of hydrogen is composed of a positively charged nucleus with one electron revolving round it. Helium has two. The next three. And when we come to uranium we discover that there are ninety-two circulating electrons. Of course there is much more to it than the foregoing simple statement. The nucleus of the helium atom consists of four protons combined with two electrons, and the nuclei of other atoms are extremely involved.

To-day the scientific notion of matter has become progressively more and more abstract until at present science can tell us nothing about it but its mathematical specification. When the mediaeval Schoolmen spun their wonderful theories about the composition of matter as a union of substance and accidents they may indeed have been standing at the very threshold of scientific truth.

This life of Lord Rutherford is an extraordinarily interesting book containing rather too much of his correspondence with the lady whom he married. We found that portion of it somewhat dull. He was a really big man both physically and intellectually, very sociable, and devoted to children. One who knew him well for many years remarked that he never made an enemy and never lost a friend. Of any other man than Rutherford the cynic might observe: how colourless! There is a very good story on page 107 concerning Lord Kelvin and the age of the earth. Indeed the book is full of good stories of one kind and another. Towards the end of it our author summarises Rutherford's scientific work in as simple language as could possibly be employed to describe great achievements in a highly technical field of activity. We cordially call attention to this splendid biography.

SAMUEL B. CROOKS.

THE GOOD PAGAN'S FAILURE. By Rosalind Murray. Longmans. 7s. 6d.

The book describes the failure of humanism to-day, and demonstrates the futility of trying to keep the second of the great commandments whilst ignoring the first. With its numerous small paragraphs it reminds one of a necklace whose beads are not striking enough to keep one's eyes from the gaps. Many topics are touched upon, but despite the undoubted truth of many of the statements the book is on the whole uninteresting. The evils are disclosed, but they occasion neither tragic nor incisive writing. It is as if the author is watching from a convent window and can but whisper to those without that the gates are always open.

Whilst showing clearly how Xenophanes' accusation can apply to-day, Miss Murray nevertheless fails to realise that the cleavage between Christian and Good Pagan is largely theoretical. In practice many whom she would call Christian are now simply making the best of both worlds. On the other hand, moral law and religious scruples resulting from Theocentricity are older than Christianity and there are many to-day whom Miss Murray would call Good

Pagans, whose virtues consist of something more than $\sigma\hat{\omega}\phi\rho\sigma\tau\acute{v}\eta$ and gentlemanliness. Such people as would refrain, shall we say, from seducing their neighbour's wife, which is still the mark of a gentleman!

The book is certainly sincere and at times very true. In keeping with its title, however, it depicts failure rather than affords a remedy, unless it be that, by showing that the failure is due to neglect of God who is a believer's sufficiency, it can be said to be a recall to religion. Even then the inference is that : extra ecclesiam nulla est salvatio.

R. S. THOMAS.

THE POOL OF VISHNU. By L. H. Myers. London : Jonathan Cape. 412 pp. 9s. 6d.

Let it be made clear right away : Mr. Myers is a "serious" novelist—that is to say, his work is concerned less with providing immediate entertainment than with demonstrating a philosophical, or semi-philosophical, attitude to life under the guise of fiction. *The Pool of Vishnu* is the sequel to that curious and fascinating book which appeared a few years ago, *The Root and the Flower*. The whole work presents a panorama of seventeenth century India, but it is only in the most general sense that it can be called a historical novel. What lies behind these two books is a concern with the fundamental problem of religions and civilizations, the dilemma of the eastern and western ways of life.

That being said, I think most critical readers will be a little disillusioned with *The Pool of Vishnu*. It does not fulfil the promise of the earlier book. In *The Root and the Flower* there was a fuller sense of the mystery of life. Although there is a curious greyness of tone in Mr. Myers's prose and in the individual incidents, in the aggregate there was an admirable creation of atmosphere. In the new book, the sense of fulness is lacking, and the problems raised in the earlier book are not fully resolved.

On the other hand, however, this dwindling of the philosophical purpose seems to have resulted in a better novel. It is as though by relinquishing the grandiose design of the original work the author had been enabled to concentrate and come to closer terms with his story. There are certainly fewer loose ends in *The Pool of Vishnu*, the plot is firmer, and altogether it is easier to read than *The Root and the Flower*. In any case, both these books are worth reading.

G. F.

TEN GREAT MOUNTAINS. By R. L. G. Irving. London : Dent & Sons Ltd. 12s. 6d.

A number of the world's most interesting as well as highest peaks are dealt with in this book. Mr. Irving considers that mere height or inaccessibility are insufficient to warrant the inclusion of a mountain, and that the relation of a mountain to the other peaks of the land wherein it is situated constitute a formidable claim to notice. For this reason we have in his book the familiar heights of Snowdon and Ben Nevis as well as mighty giants. Each of the ten mountains which lie in countries so far apart as Alaska and New Zealand has a history, often enough tragic. Most have been climbed, others, as Mount Everest, are so far unconquered. The mountains considered worthy of mention

are Mount Cook in New Zealand, Ushba in the Caucasus, Mts. Blanc, Logan, Nanga Parbat, the Matterhorn and Kangchenjunga as well as those given before.

Mr. Roy Irving, himself a very famous mountaineer, gives the story of each of the peaks. His graphic writing and well-chosen incidents and adventures from the attempts on these mountains make the book most readable, especially for those who care to do their ascents through the medium of another's writings. There are many photographs and some diagrams.

LAKELAND THROUGH THE LENS. By W. A. Poucher. London : Chapman & Hall. 18s.

This is a book of impressive beauty. There are over 120 studies of lakeland scenery, each of which is a little work of art in itself and a choice example of the finest photography. The praise is high, but the fortunate possessor of this book will not rate it too high ; such photography must be seen to be believed. As a comprehensive pictorial guide to England's most beautiful countryside the book has a definite value for the tourist. It is planned with an end in view, and the whole series of the pictures take one on a comprehensive tour through the whole of the Lake country. This tour begins at Shap and Mardale, crosses High Street and Helvellyn, ascends Saddleback and then takes one along the shores of Derwentwater. Borrowdale leads to Great End, then follow Esk Hause, Sty Head and Lingmell. Honister Pass is traversed to Buttermere and Haystacks. On the way to Wastwater one passes through Ennerdale, and Wastdale Head is reached from which one is led to the heights of Pillar, Gable and Scafell. Eskdale follows, with Langdale, the Pikes, the Crinkles and Bowfell. The journey ends at Windermere which is reached by way of the Coniston Fells and Dow Crag. As each place is traversed the writer discusses it with the familiarity of an old Lakeland Rover. Thus, the work is admirable for the mountaineer as well as suited to those less agile and painstaking. In fact, all types who visit this part of the English countryside are kept in mind.

For the mere ordinary person the charm of the book lies in its unique photography. Not only are all the familiar places portrayed, but the photographs are taken from unusual angles. Here, the artist appears. Not only are the better-known spots displayed from new and delightful viewpoints, but many others, seen only by the climbers and more adventurous, make an appearance. Also, the photographs have been taken without regard to time or season. The countryside is shown in the full flush of a luxuriant summer's day, there are pictures which display an almost Arctic landscape and the heights and rolling hillsides are portrayed in a variety of lights from bright sunshine to lowering darkness. Naturally, such diversity displays a wonderful skill. The artist employs his camera much as a skilled musician his piano, evoking an infinity of moods from the same subject. Much of this skill is placed at the disposal of the would-be photographer who is afforded freely the vast knowledge and experience of the author and photographer. Indeed, the book is almost a treatise on mountain photography as well. The owner of the book, be he artist, tourist photographer or mere dilettante lover of beautiful things, will discover endless

pleasure in turning over the pages. There is such diversity, originality and loveliness that he who has perused the book only a dozen times has but begun to appreciate its fullness and may rest assured that his artistic pleasures will remain unsated for a long period.

J. M. C.

LYNN DOYLE AS POET.

LILTS AND LYRICS. By Lynn Doyle. Dublin : The Talbot Press. 2s. 6d.

There were two poets of a past generation with whom I sometimes discussed the craft of writing verse.

They were Thomas Hardy and *Æ*, and although I was not the intimate friend of either, yet I know both of them well enough to debate the question frequently and at length.

Æ believed in inspiration, he distrusted the intellect, and claimed that his poems were dictated to him by an angel.

Thomas Hardy rejected inspiration, and pinned his faith to intellect. He told me that all his poems were conceived first as prose, and afterwards painfully hammered into verse. He admitted that the process was agonising, but perhaps that very agony is the salt which preserves his poems.

As I talked with these two poets, I had the suspicion that neither of them had quite understood the working of his own heart and brain. *Æ* was much more of an artist than he would admit ; and Thomas Hardy probably owed more to the still small voice of inspiration than he himself was aware.

I feel that in "Lilts and Lyrics," Lynn Doyle belongs more to the school of Hardy, than to that of *Æ*. There is no angel whispering in his ear ; he has not the ease of the practised versifier ; but he mercifully escapes the shallow facility which is the curse of so much Irish verse. That he is a poet, no one who has known him so long as I have known him, can have any doubt ; and the essential and characteristic virtue of the man is to be found, not in his Ballygullion Tales, but in an "Ulster Childhood," and in this, his most recent volume.

Many poets are not humorists, but a true humorist must be a poet. He must be able to recognise and to reconcile the incongruities of things, bringing seeming incompatibilities into a new and lovely relationship. Lynn Doyle in his poem "Tune on the Virginals" has defined this power in an excellent stanza.

For as the poet's Alchemy
Strange contraries accords,
Making delightful unity
Of unacquainted words.

One should not be surprised, therefore, that our humorist discovers himself in his later years as a poet ; he is only changing his medium, and not his function. He accomplishes his end in many forms, but perhaps his step is most sure, and his utterance most certain, when he walks his Ulster fields, and speaks the dialect of its sturdy peasants. That rich warm sinewy East Down speech comes from his lips full of picture-making words, sweet with old associations. It has never

been used with finer effect than in his "The Worker in the Fields," which, to my ear, is the deepest and most significant poem in the book.

Spring lanes are orange and green with grass an' sheaths of buds ;
 The West wind clashes the trees an' the apples are at my feet ;
 The wife breaks a rainbow up an' throws it out in the suds ;
 The turnip ground grows purple black with the drivin' sleet.

Here the poet writes out of the fulness of ancestral and personal memories, out of a sympathy and knowledge that goes back to primeval ages ; he finds beautiful words and images to convey his emotion to his reader, and intoxicates him with a wine drawn straight from the wood, and it is all the richer for its age.

I confess that I like Lynn Doyle's dialect poems better than his verses in a Chinese style. Mr. Arthur Waley revealed much beauty to us, but he is responsible for many imitations on the part of his admirers. Lynn Doyle does the pretty trick as well as anyone, but his spiritual home is in County Down and not in Cathay.

Amongst other poems, I would select for praise "At the Play," and "The Terns." The latter ends on a fine and impressive note :

So death slays life, then in its turn by life
 Is slain, and beauty wavers in and out,
 And Ilium burns that Athens may be wise.

The charm of this little volume is that beauty constantly wavers in and out. It reveals a sensitive mind—a mind that is not the mind of an elderly man. The poet is always young. As Rossetti wrote :

As many men are poets in their youth,
 But for one sweet-strung soul the wires prolong
 Even through all change the indomitable song.

Lynn Doyle's secret is that he possesses the sweet-strung soul.

RICHARD ROWLEY.

THE SECOND BOOK OF THOS. By Athos. (Edward Adderley.) Dublin : The Richview Press. 2s. 6d.

In these poems, conservative forms are treated with varying degrees of austerity to express the contents of a richly-stored mind. The impression which remains is one of opulent sobriety in observation, combined with a certain aristocracy of philosophic slant.

The writer's critical faculty is not uniformly just. The reiteration of the word *amber* in "Shirley Poppies" seems an error, explicable only on the ground that Athos delights in these repetitions : in "Artillery at Bruree" he exploits a whole line in this way, more successfully :—

The Maigue, the Keeper, trees, and wind.

"Cui Bono" is one of the least felicitous of the poems and might have been excluded. "Hills of Ireland" is interesting for certain inspired adjectives : but Athos is not a regional poet.

"The House by the Marsh" is the high light of the collection. Although

some facile parallelism with "The Witch of Atlas" seems obvious at once, there is a more subtle suggestion of Spencerian influence, filtered by Keats. This poem of imaginative devices has Human Personality as protagonist, and the conflict with Fear as theme. Unfortunately, in the urgency of narrative, not all the lines are sustained at the requisite level, but "break down" like the "steep" in line three.

My soul dwelt in a climate wild and harsh.
She had a house upon a steep with trees ;
The steep broke down to an enormous marsh
Which daily drank salt channels from the seas.
And all the trees were stunted with the wind,
For salt gusts whistled on the hill behind.

"Personality" rather than "soul" fits more easily into the Mariana-like *décor* of Section II and the allegorical transition in III. This is not an easy poem to review : psycho-analysts might have something to say about it. But in addition to such passages as appear to be derivative, it holds sincerity and depth. If no such brilliant inaccurate epigram has been coined for Doubting Thomas as Bacon found for Pilate, this may at least be the former's apologia. Thos (or Athos) is free from modern eccentricities of metre, and does himself most justice in the sonnet form.

TEMPLE LANE.

FLASHES FROM THE DARK. By Ferdinand Levy. Dublin : Sign of the Three Candles. 4s. 6d. net.

Here is something which promises excitement : the question is, whether this departure from insularity will prove an aesthetic disappointment. The most abiding lyrics in all literature came from a nation in captivity, or celebrating release.

Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.
They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed,
Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

The Negro race, emerging from captivity, has produced nothing like the Psalms. The Divine assurance of the earlier singers was not present : to be a Negro is not to be, by the mere fact of race, a member of a religious Order. The damage done to human dignity by slavery is found in the sorrow of the Spirituals : it survives in the "Blues." An American writer, E. Simms Campbell, has treated this question in print. (See *Esquire*, December, 1939.) He does not say--nor, to such an audience, would he be likely to say--that the literary critic is expecting some great outburst of indignation, and can only find it expressed (for obvious reasons) in the most timid forms.

As long as any race is the entertainer of its captors (or former masters) no great work can emerge. Mr. Levy knows this. A whole treatise on social injustice is compressed in the last two lines of "Dance, Brown Girl, Dance." He has that inborn sense of rhythm : in addition, he has read all the smart

American wise-crack stuff—known only to a handful of us here—which is only froth snaking down the Deep Black River after a storm nearer the source.

Here is some of the froth :—

Everybody's happy
An' everybody's gay.
That am de spirit
Of a cabaret.
If you aint afeelin' happy
An' you aint afeelin' gay,
Just take a tip, my brother,
And amake your git-away.

This clearly-defined rhythm is very heartening and hypnotic. The public is growing weary of literary cliques which follow their leaders into the desert to find, no prophet, but a shaken reed. But, in his more serious work, is Mr. Levy afraid of unsympathetic eavesdroppers? Here, his economy is notable in the use of words. Does he fear to let bitterness out of its cage? *The Negro* gives no reasons, but only states facts: *Soul of Africa* brings understanding nearer. The single poem on a lynching is meagre in the horror it suggests. Everyone in Dublin, on the other hand, will quote the lines about the moon at Killiney—so they shall not be quoted here! The lighter lyrics make tunes for themselves: and it must be remembered that all Negro work, in America or in this country, is in an acquired language.

There is admirable sureness and delicacy in Louis le Broquy's sketch of the author.

TEMPLE LANE.

THE GALLOWS-CROSS. By Herbert Palmer. J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., London.
2s. 6d. net.

Mr. Palmer has found in the world situation to-day subject for the exercise of his scorpion-stinging powers of vituperation. And he has given them full play in this little book. His denunciations are sincere, and he writes with power and unusual virility. And yet, here and there, there is a sound of creaking in the fury of his lash. It is all dreadfully true, the horrors that are taking place, and he does not try to tone them down. But it is hard to preserve the temper of true poetry in this atmosphere. He does not make such a claim for the book himself, for his sub-title is just simply, "A Book of Songs and Verses for the Times." In other words it is topical verse, and as such he has given it a venom that infuses it with a withering scorn that is devastating. The "Five Sonnets on Death," are not directly connected with present day events. But even here though they are on a much higher poetic level the atmosphere out of which he writes is evident, "This is an age of Iron, and steel winds blow." It is all despair, for though he cries in the last sonnet—

" Come ecstasy upon the tide of pain.
Come joy upon the ravening wings of woe.
Descend O peacefulness with healing rain.
Come light of life, and make the darkness glow."

This final sonnet ends the sequence with complete and utter disillusionment—

" There comes no tide of health from sun or moon,
Dark is my light, and each firm prop unsure.
I know not why I live or what to do ;
God give me strength to know, and save from rue."

LAUGHTER PARADE. By Anthony Armstrong (A. A.). London : Faber & Faber. 8s. 6d.

Reviewers of anthologies of humour, like the compilers of them, undertake a task which is not always an enviable one : for both of them the difficulties are somewhat the same, because (as A. A. remarks) everybody has his own personal taste in the matter of fun ; and (A.A. might have added) confliction of individual tastes arises, more often than not, between the chooser and the reviewer of items included in a medley of humour—that is, if a printer has not already disparaged some of the items. Here, as there are no rules or guidance, any suggestion of condemnation would be unfair, and recommendation would be futile ; so the reader must make his own selections from contributions by an extremely wide range of authors, from Mark Twain and Jerome K. Jerome and W. W. Jacobs to Anita Loos and Dr. Woodhouse. The Index of Titles includes a goodly number of articles reprinted from *Punch* ; and not many of the "accepted" humourist writers have been omitted from the List of Contributors. There are five hundred pages of polite fun. A bedside or "shelter" book, it is a very present mental help in a troubled world.

A GLIMPSE OF MOY MELL, AND OTHER PLAYS. By M. Eamon Dubhagan. W. Tempest : Dundalgan Press. 3s.

Fairies and dancing and music all contribute to the charm of these festival plays for girls and boys. The scene of the first two plays is laid on a green sward overlooking the sea. "The atmosphere"—in *The Lure of Moy Mell*—"is rose tinted, sometimes it is shot with blue and different colours which might be the shadows of the Light Maidens of Moy Mell who flit about silently . . ." In the foreground, on the green sward, lies a little schoolgirl, thinking of Moy Mell (Irish Fairyland). Soon the Light Maidens, led by the Pooka, approach and speak to her. "We have come from Moy Mell to lure you away . . ." And so she goes, followed, in the end, because of their mutual love, by her more practical sister. Not startlingly original, yet, given sensitive production and good lighting, this play, and *A Glimpse of Moy Mell*, should be delightful. I know at least one band of young players I should like to see performing either, or both, of them.

The third play has a religious theme. It tells of the miraculous cure of a little leper girl who, on the day of the Crucifixion pushes her way through the crowd to the foot of the Cross, and is cleansed by one drop of the Precious Blood.

A word of appreciation *must* go to the Dundalgan Press for the turn-out of this attractive volume.

T. D.